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THE DOCTRINES OF GRACE

BY
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TO THE MEMORY OF

MY FATHER

A FAITHFUL SERVANT

OF CHRIST AND

THE QUEEN

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THE GRACE OF GOD

I

THE GRACE OF GOD

IT was the mission of St. Paul to declare the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to the nations, and none of his successors in this high office has spoken with such persuasive power. Any one differs from St. Paul at his intellectual peril, and every one may imitate him with spiritual profit. One therefore compares together the dominant note of the Apostle and of the modern preacher with interest, and one observes with concern that the characteristic modern strikes a lower key. St. Paul carried himself as an ambassador, charged with a commission by God and addressing subjects who had rebelled against their king; the preacher of to-day is rather a barrister pleading his case with an impartial and critical jury from whom he hopes

to win a favourable verdict on Jesus Christ. The Apostle believed that he had received from God, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, a divine message containing the terms of reconciliation and appealing to every man's conscience as a sinner; the modern has found in the religion of Jesus a reasonable discipline for the soul, and endeavours to convince his fellow-men of its excellent beauty. The Apostle was firmly convinced that if any man, Jew or Gentile, received his word and believed in Jesus Christ he would see the salvation of God—such things as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man,—and that if he deliberately refused the obedience of Christ, he had missed the way of life everlasting. From the standpoint of our age there is possibly an advantage with the believing Christian—he has a wider vision and a more inspiring ideal; there is certainly some disadvantage in being an unbeliever—he has denied himself the support of the most majestic of all religious traditions and the delicate enjoyment of the most graceful æsthetic emotions. The Apostle was intense, commanding, uncompromising, and he preached with overwhelming

authority; the modern is diffident, suggestive, conciliatory, and he has no authority.

When we ask how the most modest of men personally—did he not declare himself less than the least of all saints?—and the most reverent of thinkers—did he not confess that the love of God passeth knowledge?—carried himself with such confidence, the answer is to be found in his high idea of the Christian faith of which he was an Apostle. With him Christianity was not simply the most lofty of living faiths, as it has become the fashion of to-day to regard it, in our devotion to the study of comparative religion. St. Paul certainly had too generous a doctrine of God, and too profound a doctrine of humanity, to suppose that the nations had been left since the beginning with no light, and that their religions were only systems of devil-worship. Not only was the faith of his fathers a distinct revelation of the Eternal, but throughout the race there was diffused a knowledge of God and of righteousness sufficient to guide honest men in their life and conduct. Between Gentile religions, however, and Christianity the difference was not in degree, but in nature. They were instructive

and prophetic—the preparation for the final faith; but they were natural, with no element in them which was not within the range of human attainment. Christianity has been throughout, as regards its historical facts, within the province of human life; and, as regards its organised action, Christianity must work through human agents; but Christianity, in its inherent force, is beyond the natural and has its source in God. It draws its strength from the eternal springs; its sanctions come from Deity; and when St. Paul invited men to hear and obey the Gospel, he stood upon the rock of ages, and he spoke against a background of the supernatural.

With him the supernatural was not the mere idea of superior physical force—a matter of material miracles, to which indeed St. Paul attached no importance—but the nobler idea of constraining spiritual influence, on which he delighted to insist. St. Paul had an altogether persuasive and beautiful word for the supernatural, which he was never weary of using, and which the Church should count one of her chief treasures —the Grace of God. Supernatural is a scientific word, and moves in the sphere of the physical;

grace is a religious word, and moves in the sphere of the spiritual. As St. Paul conceived it in his sane religious imagination grace was the goodwill of God which from past ages had rested on the human race as a purpose of salvation. As the thoughts of God are their own fulfilment, so that when He speaks it is done, this goodwill is not only benevolence, it is also benefaction. Through the centuries before Christ it was made manifest in patient longsuffering towards sin and ignorance, in progressive revelations of the Divine character, in evangelical promises which were embraced by believing souls, in visions of Messianic days full of hope and gladness, as well as in secret light, comfort, strength and cleansing. During the centuries which have followed Christ the Grace of God, stored in the person of the Lord and administered by the Holy Ghost, has poured into human souls, through the preaching of the gospel, through the sacraments of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, through many providences of joy and sorrow, and through the mystical fellowship of the soul with God. It has been a long procession of the divine riches—the very fulness of God passing through the avenue of

the Incarnation into the life of the human race.

St. Paul was accustomed to dwell with even more tender recollection upon the grace of God as that grace rested upon the individual. From eternity, as he imagined, the goodwill of the Almighty had reached forward to a man who was not yet in being, and already it purposed great mercies for his soul. From the day of that man's birth the divine grace had pursued and encompassed him in the teaching of his mother and the example of his father, in the words of Scripture and in many deliverances of early years. One day that grace made a chief assault upon his soul, moving his conscience and his heart, leading him to repentance and to faith till that man became a new creature in Christ Jesus. From this birthday forward the same grace guided and instructed him, succoured and sanctified him, kept him from falling and changed him into the very character of the Son of God. During hours of darkness and the straits of human sorrow that grace was his comfort and his strength, and was ever keeping his heart in the hope of life everlasting, and when at last this favoured man, his last

sin forgiven and his last fault removed, stands in the presence of God perfect it will be to the praise and the glory of the divine grace. All that this man has ever known and all that he has ever done of good, all that he is in character and power, has come from the grace of God. So that without grace he is nothing, to grace he owes all. Such, according to St. Paul, was the magnificence and the fruitfulness of the grace of God.

Should it be the case that little to-day is heard of the sovereign and almighty grace of God, this is due not to its withdrawal nor to the slackening of its tides, but rather to new modes of thought and an atmosphere alien to the supernatural. Between the mental attitude of our fathers and our own there is a great difference, wherein it is supposed that we have gained much in intelligence but wherein it is possible we have lost much in faith. According to our fathers the supernatural was very near to us, on every side, till perhaps their faith passed into credulity and their reverence into superstition. They peopled the world with spirits till not only did the holy angels stand, as surely they did, near to the children of God, ministering to the heirs of

salvation, but every awful or beautiful place in nature had its spirit of blessing or of danger. They heard voices that are not heard to-day, and received warnings to which we give no heed, and everywhere the unseen mixed itself with the seen, so that our fathers were the inhabitants of two worlds. It was easier in such a receptive state of mind to believe in God and to accept His constant and blessed intervention in human life.

During our day the veil of mystery has been lifted and the frontiers of the supernatural driven back; we have been convinced by the arguments of physical science that Nature through all her provinces is one, and that her laws are inflexible. It has been our endeavour to trace everything spiritual to a natural cause and to embrace within the visible universe all the mysteries of life. Is it wonderful that the impression has been left on men's minds that there is nothing real except that which is seen or can be discovered by the methods of science, and that the supernatural is a myth and an unreality? With this idea in the background of our minds we are not inclined to believe that God is ever acting on human souls and making Himself known in human life, and

therefore we have not only for the largest part ceased to believe in what is called the miraculous, meaning thereby physical miracles, but we have also ceased to believe in the nobler miraculous, the effects and evidence of the grace of God. We have forgotten the goodwill of God because we have forgotten that He is a Will.

Should any person have been so saturated by the modern spirit that to him the idea of the divine intervention, even for the salvation of his soul, is incredible, then nothing can be more foolish or uncharitable than to scold and to denounce him, and especially nothing is more to be deprecated than offering to him, or rather forcing upon him, the brutal alternative between believing in the supernatural or surrendering the ideal of a holy life. If any one be unable to believe in God as a personal and beneficent will and in Jesus Christ as the revelation of God and the Saviour of the world, then he is suffering an immense loss, but an austere ideal still stands out before his soul. He can still respect himself and still serve his fellow-men. He can still appreciate righteousness and fight the good fight against sin. He can still possess his soul

in patience, and await with courage the unknown future. His models in the natural virtues are such as may well strengthen and inspire any one, for they are Socrates dying bravely with nothing but a plank to carry him across the great sea to the new world, and Marcus Aurelius sadly speculating regarding the origin and end of all things, but ever doing his duty bravely and carrying himself purely in the battle of life. His, however, is an incalculable deprivation and a dreary outlook, for his conception of life is so much more hopeless than that which filled the heart of the Gentile Apostle with gladness, and touched all his life with a light that shone the more clearly when he was a chained prisoner and a candidate for martyrdom.

What conception of life can be more cheerless than to think of it as a huge piece of machinery into which one is cast at birth as a sheaf of corn between the teeth of the threshing-mill, through whose revolving drums and whirling wheels one is carried from stage to stage for seventy years, and from which what remains is cast at death into an unknown and dark chamber. What discourages and shakes one in this severe idea of

life is the hopelessness of repenting the past and regaining the years which have been lost. One has been caught in the hands of mighty law, and because one's father or one's great-grandfather has been a sinner, and because one in the days of his youth has sinned himself, then the sins of the far-distant past are so entailed and fastened upon the will and heart that life can never escape from their malign influence, but must ever accomplish its predestination of evil. What availeth to fight when the issue is already settled? and what availeth to tell me of the inflexible majesty and the unerring certainty of the moral laws when I myself am their victim and their illustration? It is in such circumstances that even the firmest and most convinced believer in the reign of law is visited with what may be only a devout imagination, but what every one must hope is also an instinct —the hope of help from without.

Suppose that there be some other force in this spiritual creation than law, and that, indeed, law be not a force at all, but only the instrument by which a living will is working. Suppose that this will can assert itself—not by the subversion

of law, but by a new application of law; not by ignoring any law, but by introducing some superior law. What one desires is that a spring-time should come to one's life when upon the waste ground which has been covered with obscene rubbish and is haunted with every evil thing, the birds of the air shall drop the good seed, and the showers of heaven water it, and the sunshine of heaven quicken it till the waste places be all carpeted with green grass which not only covers the evil of the past, but changes that very evil into flowers and fruit. When one looks upon his life as a foul and stagnant river which is running in the bottom of the channel and into which has poured the moral sewage of many years, he must pray at times, whatever he may believe, that a springtide of that great ocean from which the river came pure as a shower upon the mountain, and to which that river must return, would break through all barriers and rush up the unclean channel, filling it from bank to bank with pure and wholesome water in which the sediment of years will be changed and cleansed. This may be incredible, but this surely is to all men most desirable; and this

really is the Pauline conception of the Grace of God.

What, however, if this most enticing image of religion—a reinforcement from God—be only a hope and a dream which filled the sensitive and mystic soul of St. Paul, but which has no reality in history or in life? If the grace of God be a fact, and God has intervened, then there ought to be evidence of so great an affair which would convince any reasonable mind and afford a sound basis for faith. There is such an evidence, and it is really twofold, standing, first, in the person of Jesus Christ; and second, in Christian experience. It is a fact, and one about which there can be no doubt, that at a certain date in the history of the human race, and when the race was falling into moral decay, a man appeared in Palestine who bore no signs of evil heredity, and was impervious to His decadent environment. For about three years He lived in the full light of criticism and hostility, and during that time He so carried Himself in word and in deed amid all the circumstances of ordinary human life, that not even His bitterest enemy was able to accuse Him of sin, and to

this day His life remains the most perfect manifestation of spiritual grace. His influence also was so attractive and so irresistible that any sinful man or woman coming under its power, Mary Magdalene or Zacchæus, was lifted out of the former habit of sin and passed into a new atmosphere of virtue, and any person of high and pure character, a John or a Mary, rose to the full height of excellence, and his soul opened as a flower of spiritual beauty. As we now study the life of Jesus, examining His motives, hearing His words, watching His actions, it comes with conviction to our minds that a new force has entered into human life and has begun to work unto salvation. With Christ as the Head and Spring, another race rises within the human race, like fresh blood coursing along the veins of a decrepit body, or like a healing process begun within the ravages of disease. There are now, if one may so say, two hereditary lines, the old and the new; and one passing from the old escapes from the influence of the sin of himself and his fathers and enters into the spiritual atmosphere of Christ Jesus, so that old things pass away and

all things are made new. As St. Paul journeyed from city to city of the Roman Empire, then falling into corruption, and preached the Evangel of the grace of God, amidst the moral ruins of cities so unspeakably corrupt as Corinth and Rome, little communities arose, not perfect yet in character and life, but not unworthy to be called by the name of saints. The same heredity has continued and asserted itself unto the present day, and is manifested beyond controversy as often as a man who has disobeyed and been punished by the eternal law of righteousness passes under the sway and enters into the fellowship of Jesus Christ. Grace is therefore not an imagination, however beautiful and fascinating, but it is an historical and objective fact contained in the biography of Jesus, and repeated endlessly in human history for eighteen centuries.

When one inquires whence Jesus came, and what is the unseen spring of His influence, then it is open for any person to say that He was simply an amazing phenomenon in ordinary life, and that His grace was simply an achievement of pre-eminent character. This is, however, an explanation which does not meet the facts

of the case, and places a strain upon reason which it can hardly bear. Since there never has been any parallel to this perfect sinlessness and this immense influence, one is rather convinced that wherever Christ came from it was not from within the race in which He originated this new strain, seen alike in the Jewish and Roman world, and that however Christ exercises His constant power it is something more than the force of example now eighteen centuries distant. Is it not the case that when one hears the Word of Jesus and considers His life, he discovers that the idea of God which is a part of the natural capital of his soul has suddenly been realised before his face, and that Jesus is at least the equivalent or spiritual value of God? He fulfils to our minds all that we have put into the idea of God, so that beyond Him nothing divine can be imagined or desired. Is it not, therefore, reasonable to believe that when Jesus appeared in the midst of the human race, born of a woman, God Himself had intervened and the very grace of God had appeared and become a resident power in human history?

Our second evidence for the reality of the

divine grace is the experience of the Christian Church, and by that phrase we mean the experience of its different members, and especially of those who have made fullest trial of the Christ. Any one desiring certain information in a department of study will naturally seek it from its experts, and it is worse than folly to seek our evidence of the matters of religion from the students of science or of philosophy. The sure witnesses in this highest department are the saints, the men who have overcome sin and have attained unto holiness; and their testimony in all the ages regarding the influence which has redeemed their lives and made perfect their souls is constant and unhesitating. Whether we ask St. Paul or St. John, whether we ask St. Bernard or John Calvin, it matters not to what school of theology or to what ecclesiastical province the witness belongs, he has one reply to our question. If I am not to-day as other men, sinful and disobedient, if I have to-day a quiet conscience and a clean heart, if I have been able to do any good thing in the world, and to help any human being, it is not due to myself. This good has been due from beginning to end to the grace of

God; and if I ever attain unto the perfection of the heavenly kingdom, then to the same grace must be ascribed my achievement. This is the spirit of the prayers of the Christian Church and of her praise and of her theology and of her endeavours, and it is hardly to be believed that her experience of eighteen centuries has been one great delusion, and that in her own strength she has done those great marvels which she has always ascribed to the grace of God.

One may even leave this historical evidence and venture upon an appeal to the heart of the ordinary man who is not utterly frivolous, and who has had some experience of life. Is it not the case that from time to time he realises that an influence has been pleading with him, and restraining him, which was separate from books, even the Bible, and from friends, even the best, and that in any great event of his life, when he rose to his height and did that which before he had hardly believed possible, he was inspired and moved by a power that was from above? Is not every faithful man also haunted with the fear lest he should suddenly be overcome by a fiery temptation, and in five

minutes should wreck the whole of his past life, and not only his own life, but the concerns committed to his charge, so that the pulpit, or the law, or medicine, or commerce, be almost hopelessly disgraced by his fall? It is in the moment of his unexpected achievement that a thoughtful man is most humble and reverent, for he knows this was the doing of God. It is in the hour of spiritual anxiety that a man hears with unspeakable thanksgiving of a power so vigorous and so strong that it can restrain him even when the currents of temptation are running at their fiercest, and it is with a sense of great relief that he commits himself in all modesty and simplicity of faith into His hands, Who is able to keep us from falling, and Whose grace, as it is alone the source of all goodness, is also the one hope of spiritual preservation.

REPENTANCE

II

REPENTANCE

It has been a convention in Christian thought to strike a telling contrast between the mission of John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus Christ, in which the mission is taken as temporary and the ministry as eternal; but it is possible to carry this contrast to a dangerous extreme. Of course it goes without saying that in an historical sense John was simply the forerunner of the Messiah, whose office was to close the prophetical succession and to herald the opening of the new dispensation. His was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord'; his was the figure of one preparing himself for the Lord. When the Messiah had come, and opened the Kingdom of God, the work of the Baptist was in appearance finished, and it only remained that this heroic servant should seal his selfless life by

death — a martyr's death. After a spiritual sense, the message and service of the Baptist were not closed by the arrival of Jesus, and cannot cease till Jesus come the second time, without sin, unto salvation. Stripped of circumstances, it is his high duty to awaken the conscience when religion has degenerated into hypocrisy and irreligion has grown into corruption, to make tender the heart that it be as spring soil, clean and open, for the good seed of the Evangel. His function in the work of grace must be to level down the swelling mountains of pride, and to fill up the dark valleys of despair, that there may be a smooth road for the chariot of Christ; and so long as there is a sinful man to be saved John will meet him carrying the rod of the Law, that his hearer may be ready for the Gospel. First, John, with his camel's-hair garment and his leathern girdle, and then Jesus at the marriage feast; first the Prophet, with strong, merciless words, and then the gentle Galilean saying, 'Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden.' A body-guard of graces attend the Saviour, among which are Faith and Forgiveness and Holiness, Peace

and Joy, but the grace which cometh first in the order of religious experience is stern and strenuous, the grace of the broken and contrite heart.

As we live in a day when this grace is very much a stranger, it is needful that we should identify her face, and make certain that godly sorrow is not a fancy of religious poetry. For that end, let the inquirer turn to the manuals of the soul and open what, after the Gospels, is the chief, not Augustine's *Confessions*, nor the *Imitation of Christ*, nor the *Pilgrim's Progress*, nor the *Saint's Rest*, although in each of these the mystery of the spiritual life is clearly set forth, but that book which is the heart of Old Testament Scripture. It is in the Psalms more than in any other place that we see the soul go out upon her 'dim and perilous way' in search of her home in God. Among the Psalms there are seven, certain of which St. Augustine had hung before his eyes as he lay a-dying, and which since the days of Origen have had a name and place of their own as the 'Psalms of Penitence.' As one reads the 6th, the 32nd, the 38th, the 51st, the 102nd, the 130th, and the 143rd, with their profound sense of the guilt of

sin, their fear of the Divine displeasure, their unselfish longing for God's mercy, their passionate prayers for cleansing, he recognises the strength of Hebrew religion. Wherever the Old Testament saints failed, it was not in undervaluing sin. Whatever they did not know, they understood penitence. Their massive strength of faith, which was not tossed by every wind of opinion, and their majestic conceptions of God, Who was to them the Rock of Righteousness, were rooted and grounded in that bitter, wholesome sorrow for sin which is the condition and earnest of true religion. It will be an evil day, and a calamity to the life of the Church, when this virile instrument of worship—the very epic of righteousness — gives place to hymns charged with beautiful emotion, but as a rule so destitute of ethical force that one could hardly have imagined that the Ten Words of Moses had ever been written.

It may be urged that this grace, in its pronounced and painful form, belongs to the period of the Law, and has no place under the Gospel; that its home is under the awful shadow of Mount Sinai, and that it ought not to live in the

sunshine of Calvary. The child of the new dispensation is not a slave, but a son of God, who has been freely forgiven by the blood of Jesus, and is daily satisfied by His Spirit. Unto him belong, as his birthright, the assurance of faith, the peace which passeth understanding, and the joy unspeakable, and not reproaches of conscience, and soreness of heart, and bitter humiliation. The agony of the Psalms does not befit those who have been brought near by the Cross of Jesus, and who stand complete in Him. This may be true, but it was not the experience of St. Paul, who was the champion of grace and the representative saint of the New Covenant. As he writes in his old age to his son Timothy, and exalts the gospel ministry, he is suddenly carried out of his course by an undercurrent of feeling, and magnifies the office of Christ, which is to save sinners, 'of whom I am chief.' This is one of the most impressive utterances in the history of religion, whether you consider the writer or its date. He was not one who had played the fool in his youth before God and man, for he could declare that he had lived in good conscience all his days, by which St. Paul intended that so far

as he saw light he had always followed it, and so far as he knew righteousness he had always done it. His persecution of Christ in His disciples was only a pledge of his honesty and of his devotion to the will of God. It was this man of natural nobility and selfless character who, not in affected humility, but in absolute sincerity wrote himself down as worse than the Philippian jailor and the evil livers of Corinth. Nor was St. Paul a recent convert, still ignorant of the mind of Christ, and young in grace, but one who for many years had been working out his salvation with fear and trembling, and in whom the readers of his life can trace the clear and convincing likeness of his Lord. With this career behind him, so stainless both as a Jew and as a Christian, the most honourable of Pharisees, the most gracious of apostles, St. Paul forgets his achievements and his attainments, and, when he instructs his son Timothy, remembers only his sin. As we catch this glimpse into the Apostle's heart, we begin to understand how St. Paul was able to enter into the mystery of Christ's sacrifice, and to realise the magnificence of the Divine Grace. Accord-

ing to his conception of sin was his conception of salvation.

Beside those passages of penitence, which soften the most majestic experiences of Bible religion, may be placed certain of later days, not unworthy of this high companionship. Towards the end of his life, than which none has been seen more perfect outside the Gospels, St. Francis d'Assisi wept so much over his sins that he injured his eyesight; but he would listen to no remonstrance. 'I would rather choose to lose the sight of the body than to repress those tears by which the interior eyes are purified that they may see God.' As George Herbert lay a-dying, he said: 'I am sorry that I have nothing to present to my merciful God except sin and misery, but the first is pardoned, and a few hours will put a period to the latter.' Francis Quarles, the author of the *Emblems*, expressed great sorrow for his sins; and when it was told him that his friends conceived that he did thereby much harm to himself, he answered, 'They were not his friends that would not give him leave to repent.' And Bunyan learned 'that none could enter into life but those who were in downright

earnest, and unless they left the wicked world behind them, for here (in the narrow road) was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul and sin.' He writes: 'I was more loathsome in my own eyes than was a toad, and I thought I was so in God's eyes too. . . . I thought none but the devil himself could equal me for inward wickedness and pollution.' One of the ablest men of his time used to say of Erskine of Linlathen that he never thought of God but the thought of Mr. Erskine was not far away; yet Principal Shairp informs us that in this holy man's last years all who conversed intimately with him were struck with 'his ever-deepening sense of sin and the personal way in which he took this home to himself.' Penitence is no monopoly or penalty of the Bible believers; it is one of the signs of true religion in every age. It is not the Pharisee, full of self-conceit and arrogance, who is nearest to perfection, but the penitent, despising and condemning himself, for the history of the Church shows that penitent is only another name for saint.

As this fine grace is almost an anachronism in our day—a survival of an obsolete state of mind

—it is also necessary to distinguish repentance from its counterfeit, for all sorrow for sin is not unto life, but some is rather unto death. It happens often in life that a man flings the reins to passion and sins with a high hand in his youth. When years have come and gone, he awakes some day and calls himself a fool. The fruit has turned to ashes in his mouth, and the dregs of the cup are bitter. He wishes some one had warned him with strong words in his madness, and had restrained him by force. Had he been wiser then, he would have had a stronger body and a more honourable position now, and he could scourge himself for his blindness. This is bitter, gnawing regret, but it is not repentance.

Another man of nobler mind is in despair because he has quarrelled with the eternal law, and has been worsted. 'What need I speak?' he says; 'I must bear as best I can, and there is an end of the matter; I have deserved what I am enduring.' There is here a sense of law and a sense of guilt; but this is not repentance, because there is in the man's mind no sense of God. Judas Iscariot broke his heart after his betrayal of Christ, and went out to die; he

certainly felt more than selfish regret. His soul was filled with bitterness for the injury to Christ, but he did not repent, because if he had repented, he had turned unto the Lord, and had been the greatest monument of Divine grace. Regret may be only selfishness; remorse may be unbelief; repentance forgets self and trusts in God. What distinguishes repentance from every other form of sorrow is this: if it lays us in the dust, it is at the foot of the Cross and the throne of God.

It is necessary in our day to magnify this grace, because it has been depreciated, and is often counted little less than a religious hysteric. Various contemporary influences militate against this state of mind, and, indeed, have almost driven it out of the religious consciousness. A certain school of modern literature has done much to lessen the sense of conscience amongst men, and has done so after a subtle and attractive fashion. We have been taught in our time by one influential teacher, whose delicate thought and perfect style we have all admired, that the human mind of man passes through two moods. One is the Jewish, austere, ascetic, legal, wherein a man is concerned with righteous-

ness, with guilt, with punishment. The other is lighter and more gracious, and had its origin in Greece, wherein a man is conscious of beauty, and perfect, divine, harmonious living. It may be natural for some people to play the Hebrew, but in that case he will neither be a happy nor an attractive person. It is natural for others to play the Greek, and to call for a full and free life; and one, therefore, may have no sense of repentance, because he has entered into greater liberty, and has attained, he thinks, unto finer proportions in humanity. One also is haunted with the fear—but this must be said with great diffidence—that the evangelical type of religion in our day is not always meet for repentance. Is it not the case that the gospel has been preached very frequently on such unethical conditions, and with such dangerous liberality, that men have been moved not so much to repent of their sin as to grasp greedily at a cheap salvation? They have not learned to despise themselves because they have come short, but they have learned to escape from punishment. The great preachers of the past used to lay much stress upon what

was called in ancient theological language 'law work.' Richard Baxter and William Law first took men and women to Mount Sinai, and we are not prepared to say that they did not keep them too long under the shadow and sound of the awful Mount. It is just possible that some of their pupils tarried so long at Mount Sinai that they never escaped from the wilderness, and never saw the Land of Promise. It remains, however, a good thing either for a hard or for a shallow man, filled with selfishness and vanity, to stand before the black darkness, and to hear the thunder of the eternal law. It humbles his pride, and cleanses him from self-conceit, and this experience lays the foundation of a nobler and a stronger manhood. As all know who have read Bunyan's *Grace Abounding*, none are so ready to welcome the Cross of Christ as those who have passed through the discipline of law. When a man comes to realise his own entire unworthiness, and his ingrained bias to evil, he understands the greatness of Christ's achievement, and surrenders himself with more absolute faith into the hands of his Saviour.

Whatever may be the reason, people are at

any rate not much given to repentance to-day, and as a rule they are not at all ashamed of an unrepentant state of mind. They are apt to complain of Psalms written in a minor key of penitence, and refuse to sing hymns such as 'Rock of Ages,' where the sinner declares that he is foul and has no hope of cleansing save through the blood of Christ. What this person says—and he is a representative modern—is this: 'I know the meaning of the English language, and I know the history of my own life. I am not going to tell lies at any time, and especially I wish to be truthful when I am worshipping God. I am not foul, and I am not going to say I am foul when I know that that would be a falsehood.' This person is of course perfectly right in not singing songs of penitence when they would be a lie on his lips. There are undoubtedly a certain number of psalms which ought not to be sung by a person who is proud and self-righteous, just as there are a certain number of hymns regarding the future state which ought not to be sung by any person who is absolutely satisfied with this present world and has no longing whatever for Jerusalem the

golden. Undoubtedly there is a great amount of hypocrisy and unreal sentiment in the conventional praise of our public worship, and it would be a good thing if people were so affected by a sense of honesty and the fitness of things that they were silent when a congregation is declaring its penitence and they are not penitent, or a congregation is longing to be with the Lord and they are desiring only to be in their offices. At the same time it ought to be pointed out to that person that if he is entirely satisfied with his condition this is no ground for pride, but rather a ground for humility.

Suppose that some one is practising an art, and you go into the room where the work is lying. You are shown the work, and as conversation proceeds you discover that the artist considers that he has touched perfection. Drawing and colouring are, in his opinion, altogether right, and you cannot discover that this person is able to distinguish between his work and that of Raphael. You do not on that account admire that person, or consider that he is likely himself to be a great artist. You are rather convinced that he will never touch even the lowest levels

of perfection, because he is utterly unconscious of his own imperfection. After the same fashion, if any one considers that he has written so well that criticism gives him no information and chastens no fault, then it is certain that he has done his best work, and his best work is extremely bad. We admit in the sphere of art and literature that the depreciation of one's own work and a sense of its deficiencies are conditions of success. And yet a cultured modern will consider himself superior to the saints of the past and their successors of to-day, because they sing the 51st Psalm and the 'Rock of Ages' with intense feeling and he has been raised above this experience. As a matter of fact this person is sealing his own doom and shutting himself out from the higher reaches of religion. A Pharisee is a very incomplete work of religion, and there are for him no future possibilities. You can finish a villa, such a villa as is erected by the modern builder, to the disgrace of the State and religion, within a few weeks, and it is not likely to last more than a few years. When we build a cathedral, nothing but the foundation is seen for years, and it may be that centuries

will pass before that cathedral is finished. When it is finished, it stands a monument of human art and industry, and will remain unto all ages and after miles of those miserable buildings have passed again into their kindred dust. This is the difference between the cheap and flimsy character of the Pharisee and the strong but slow growth of sainthood; and the foundations of sainthood are laid in the broken and contrite heart.

Suppose, however, some person were to say: 'I am not penitent, and I never have been penitent; the atmosphere of the day does not encourage this grace, and all my efforts to obtain it have failed. Can I create penitence? and is there any method by which a shallow, self-sufficient, self-righteous person can have his character deepened and his pride turned into humility?' Surely the first prescription is to turn to the Law of Moses, and it is an excellent arrangement by which the Ten Commandments are read every Sunday in a public congregation. Suppose a man take those commandments one by one, and, using each as a candle of the Lord, go into the holes and corners of his heart; suppose he sit down in quietness

alone with his soul and say to himself in all honesty, 'Am I perfect by the first commandment, and by the second, by the third, and by the tenth?' Suppose he take for a commentary on the commandments the Sermon on the Mount, and be not content until he be able to acquit himself not only because he has not done evil, but because he has not imagined evil, not only because his life is clean, but because his thoughts are pure. The commandments may not affect the conscience of some people, and they may be inclined to hold themselves not guilty by the Ten Words of Moses. For this person it would be a good thing to take his life and to lay it alongside the life of our Saviour Jesus Christ, comparing how the Lord spake and how He carried Himself, with how we speak and how we carry ourselves. Perhaps the best thing that can be done with a person who is painting, and painting very badly, is not to criticise, and far less to be angry with him, but to place before him a masterpiece of the great age, and to leave the blunderer alone with perfection. If there be the faintest sense of art in him, this young painter will destroy all that he has done and will go away to begin in a

better and more hopeful spirit because a humbler and more ambitious spirit. The impression of the master's greatness will give to the pupil a sense of his own littleness ; and if it be hard for him to burn everything that he has done, yet one can encourage him with the hope that out of the fire will arise a new artist. The contrast between the life of our Master and our own is enough to humble even the most self-satisfied person, for although the linen of the Holy Table seems white when we hold it in our hands, it shows poorly beside the untrodden snow at the height of a great mountain. Saint Peter was one of the most self-sufficient of men and almost impervious to criticism, and yet one day the vision of the bright excellency of his Master came strongly upon him, and he saw in Jesus, with His peasant's raiment and His lowly habits of life, the very glory of God. Although there were times when Peter was prepared to advise the Master and to show Him His mistakes, that day he could only say, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.' Should it happen that we remain untouched by the Ten Words and by the life of the Holy Gospel, what else can be done for Pharisaic and

religious pride? One other remedy remains; and if that fail, there is no hope that we can ever attain unto the grace of penitence. Let us take our way to the Cross of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and there consider Him in His innocence and in His sufferings. If Christ living has not overcome the soul with a sense of His holiness and our sinfulness, then may be Christ's dying, with our sins wound round His head as a crown of thorns, with our sins piercing His hands and His feet as iron nails, may break the hardest heart and lay us in contrition at His feet. This humility is the beginning of salvation, for it is the condition and prophecy of forgiveness. The Christ before Whom we lie in contriteness of heart has been raised up first on the Cross and then on the Throne, that with one hand He might give us repentance, and with the other the forgiveness of sins.

FORGIVENESS

III

FORGIVENESS

TWO different men will take as different views of one of those picturesque fishing harbours which can be found along the north-east coast of Scotland and of England. An artist comes to the place in the glory of the summer, and to him the fishing village appeals on purely æsthetic grounds—on account of the little stream which has cut its way through the grey rocks, and on whose banks the little village is built; the red tiles on the roofs of the weather-beaten cottages; the old-fashioned folk that gather upon the little quay; the boats, with their brown sails, coming home in the setting sun; and the sea of the colour of an emerald gently laving the feet of the iron cliffs. This is to him a fetching bit of scenery, and in the winter-time he transfers it to canvas; next spring it is hung upon the walls of

the Academy, and is admired by city folk living in safety and at their ease. But neither he nor they understand. Should you wish to know the value of the break in the cliffs and the shelter of the harbour, you had better ask a fisherman, and ask him during the black winter months. This man has seen the storm coming when far out at sea, and lifted his nets without delay. He has run for home before the wind, and through the waves has made for the harbour lights. His wife and children have been watching on the quay, which is now swept with spray, and their hearts stand still as his boat comes near the entrance between two jagged rocks. As the boat flashes through the water and comes out on the harbour side, the men lay down their oars and lie back upon their seats. As the boat comes up to the side of the quay, hands are stretched out to bid them welcome, and hearts are lifted in thankfulness to God because they have escaped from the perils of the sea. On such a night men and women understand the value of the harbour as no artist can, who paints it in its peace, and no crowd of inland people, who admire it for its red and blue. To the one it is a picturesque piece of

scenery; to the other it is a hiding-place from the storm.

After the same fashion one can take two views of the Bible, and each of them has its own value. It is impossible that any cultured person should be indifferent to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as a noble literature, or fail to admire their unique grandeur of style, their magnificent imagery, the glowing spirit of their hope, and the elevation of their moral teaching. Among all the masterpieces of literature the Bible must take the first place, beside which the achievements of poets and philosophers pale and are put to shame. One, however, realises that admiration for the literary qualities of the Bible is doing poor justice to the inherent power and the spiritual attraction of the Book. The best witness to the service of this Book is not a man of letters, but a sinner who has been saved. He who has been at sea and has been tossed to and fro in the darkness, who has seen the distant lights and rested not until he had passed into the shelter, alone can testify to the strength and comfort of the Bible. It is the forgiven penitent that can bear the clearest

evidence to the Book, for among its chief messages is the promise of forgiveness.

There may be a few people who have never felt the want of forgiveness, and to whom the word itself has a strange sound, but the desire is surely indigenous in the human race, and any exception does not prove a stronger or finer character. Should one have had the misfortune to offend a friend, and so to wound his heart that intercourse has ceased between the two, then it argues a low state of mind, or an incredible frivolity, that the offender should never miss his friend's company, and should never regret his friend's alienation. Any person with a trace of nobility will consider this quarrel to have been the chief misfortune of his life, and will ever entertain an earnest hope that the way be opened up for reconciliation. He will surely count it a chief day in his life when he has been assured that his friend forgives him, and they return to the relations of former years. Should this be true of human fellowship, how much more true must it be of the communion between the soul and God. And unless it be that a person is able to say that he has never sinned, and

therefore has no need of forgiveness, he must be callous to the last degree who has not longed to be assured that his sins have been forgiven of God, and that there is no cloud between him and his Father.

It ought, however, to be said that the sense of sin, and therefore the desire for forgiveness, varies in different ages, since there is a fashion in religion as there is a fashion in books, and clothes, and manners, as there is also a fashion in science. As each age has its own particular sins, so each age has its own particular penitence. It has been unfortunate that in religious literature conviction of sin has been represented in a form so stereotyped, and that no one is supposed to be penitent unless he is penitent after the convention of the day. For instance, there are those who realise that in sinning against God they have broken the eternal law of righteousness which runs throughout their life in this world, and which will run throughout their life in the world which is to come. They realise themselves to be like a person who had violated the law of the Roman Empire, and who was liable at any moment to be arrested. It mattered not whether

he went to Rome, or to Corinth, or to Jerusalem, or to the ends of the civilised world, he was still within the reach of Rome, and from Rome could never escape. For him there was nothing but hiding and fleeing; but hide and flee as he pleased, some day he would be brought across sea and land to stand before Cæsar's judgment-seat. Nothing can affect the imagination more powerfully than a sense of outlawry, the hopeless contest with almighty and omnipresent law, in whose hands we are utterly helpless, from which we have no appeal. This sense of outlawry reaches its highest degree when any one is convinced that he has sinned against the law which extends through all worlds, and which is absolutely unerring. Is it cowardice in him that he should be afraid, or that he should earnestly desire a settlement? and is that an unworthy form of religion that one should seek in every direction for some means by which this great quarrel be healed and peace be made between the soul and the eternal righteousness?

Another man may never have thought of his relation to law, but he may be much concerned with his relation to himself, being overwhelmed,

not with the thought that he has broken God's commandments, but with the thought that he has stained his own soul. His soul, through sin, has become to him something loathsome and horrible, like unto the skin of a leper when his disease is white upon him, like unto pure snow upon which some loathsome black liquid has been poured. What he desires is not so much reconciliation with God as reconciliation with himself, not to be saved from the fear of punishment, but to be saved from the agony of self-humiliation. And still another man may have been affected not so much by the guilt of sin, or by its corruption, as by its outrageous disloyalty and ingratitude. From early days he has been accustomed to think of God as his heavenly Father, and has not been indifferent to the innumerable mercies of God. He suddenly awakens to the fact that his return for this unwearied care and divine patience, wherein God has pitied him as a father pitieth his children, has been forgetfulness, and disobedience, and selfishness, and unspirituality. It is as if he had wounded his nearest and dearest, and had done so in wanton carelessness and without a

feeling of penitence. What the first man desires is to be reconciled to law; what the second desires is to be reconciled to himself; what the third desires is to be reconciled to his Father; and in every case the heart is longing for forgiveness, and for every case provision is made in the forgiveness of God.

When one turns from the human to the divine side of forgiveness, one learns from Holy Scripture not only that God forgives sin, but that in forgiving sin He acts in a perfectly God-like fashion. Nowhere is it taught that He will make any bargain with the sinner and loose the burden of sin on condition of receiving a gift or compensation from the sinner. Although the human heart has been apt unconsciously to imagine conditions, and has vainly tried to offer some recompense to God, no man would so deal with his offending brother as he imagines God would deal with him. When one of us is prepared to forgive, he always forgives freely; when one of us asks another's forgiveness, he always expects a free forgiveness. It were little short of insult that one should approach a neighbour whom he had offended, and offer him this or that

compensation in the hope that he would then forgive. It is enough that one should be penitent to earn forgiveness from any friend worthy of the name. It is worthy of that friend to grant the forgiveness without conditions. What may be rendered unto him by the forgiven offender in after years is another matter: it will be given freely, as forgiveness was granted freely. When the two debtors stood before their creditor in the parable, and neither could pay, the one owing five hundred pence and the other fifty, their creditor forgave them, or, as it might read, graced them both, without money and without price.

When the hope is held out in Holy Scripture that God will not only forgive, but is also prepared to forget our sins, the promise takes us deeper into the heart of forgiveness. One can understand how a person should forgive; it is difficult to understand how he can forget. Forgiveness depends upon the will, but forgetfulness is beyond our power. If anything can be forgotten, it must be through being replaced. If an incident can be covered over by another incident, so that the one sinks and fades into the

other, then the former is not only removed from sight, but it is removed also from the mind. So long as the son remained in the far country, his departure, with its insolence and ingratitude and foolishness, could not be forgotten. When he returned to his father, in penitence of temper and lowliness of faith, the return removed the departure from his father's mind, so that as often as his eyes fell upon his son he saw him not as he went out, but as he came home. Is it not also the case that when God forgives our sins, He forgives us in Christ Jesus, beholding not the sinner that was, but the saint who is to be, so that when He thinks of the Apostle, He remembers not Saul the persecutor, but only sees Paul the prisoner of Jesus Christ?

One can never be satisfied with forgiveness unless it should be accompanied by forgetfulness, and there are times when one longs for a yet further but perhaps impossible blessing, that sin should not only be forgiven and forgotten, but that sin should be utterly removed and pass out of existence. Although sin be forgiven, and although God has cast it, to use Scripture imagery, behind His back and into the depths

of the sea, it yet exists, and some day may appear. It requires not that our enemy should dredge the sea for it, and should bring it up against us through pure malice, for sin has an unholy power of vitality, and might any day face us, if not in our lives, in the lives of others whom we have injured. Every word which we have spoken is immortal, as well as every deed which we have done, and in ages to come both may arise and call us cursed. Is there no power which shall not only loose sin from our conscience, but also bring it to an end in our life? Here we come upon that marvellous word that sin shall be blotted out, and we enter still further into the mystery of this grace. We cannot understand what may be included in the idea, nor can we understand fully the power which will carry it into effect, but we may believe that in the long processes of grace the ravages of sin will be so repaired that what was evil will turn to good, and out of immense wrongdoing blessing will be brought to ourselves and to our fellow-men. St. Paul's persecution of Stephen not only gave Stephen a quicker crown of martyrdom, but also taught St. Paul

devotion and humility all the days of his life, so that it may be said that St. Stephen was the spiritual father of St. Paul, and through St. Paul St. Stephen wrought unto the salvation of the world. Mary Magdalene had not shown that spiritual devotion to the Lord which has secured her the affection of Christ's disciples in all ages had she not first wasted her passion, and been dragged in the mire. It was her grateful sense of the salvation of Jesus that kept her, not for a brief space, but for all her life, at the feet of her Lord. It is impossible to believe that sin can last for ever, for sin is negative and passing: good only is positive and lasting. The very crown of forgiveness will be the destruction of sin, when the worst sinner shall be able to look round the spiritual universe and see no trace of the evil which he has done, because it has been absorbed and changed into goodness.

We also gather from the Scriptures of the New Testament that the forgiveness of sins is connected in some way with the life and death and resurrection and endless intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a natural question to ask why our heavenly Father should not simply

say, 'I forgive,' and why it was necessary, as it appears to have been, that His beloved Son should endure the humility of the incarnation, and offer that immense sacrifice of the Cross in order that the stream of forgiveness should run free and full, without barrier and without hindrance. Any complete answer to this question would have to sound the deepest mysteries of the spiritual life, and could only be given by one who has completely understood the relation of God to the law of righteousness and the action of the law of righteousness upon the spiritual life of the soul. Some things, however, are within our vision and within our understanding, and they throw a very suggestive light upon the relation of the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins to the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. This is without doubt an ethical universe in which we live, and by that we mean not only that there is such a thing as good and such a thing as evil, but that good is bound to be blessed and evil is bound to be punished. No doubt the idea which some people have imagined of the Eternal is virtually an extremely good-natured but very weakly father, who cannot

find it in his heart to punish anybody and who is feared by nobody. This is not the scriptural doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, and this is not the likeness of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Were it so, there had been no misery in the far country; and were it so, there had been no joy in the Father's House. Any earthly father who treats his family after this slack and unbecoming fashion will rear wastrels and prodigals, and the day will surely come when his sons will lift up their hands not to bless but to denounce him. One of the chief blessings in human experience is a father who has been not only loving and merciful, but also severe and faithful. It were indeed a calamity if the Father of our souls were only a greater and more foolish Eli, who cannot distinguish between saints and sinners, and who treats the sinner exactly as he would treat the saint. This world would not be worth living in for a week if there were not a righteous God upon the throne of the universe. Sin then would obtain the upper hand and righteousness be put to everlasting confusion in the market-place. The great judgments upon iniquity would come to

an end, and when they ceased human life would be a synonym for injustice and corruption. These judgments have cleansed life and have filled the hearts of the righteous with hope. What a blessing were the fire and brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah, whose warning casts its wholesome shadow over Hebrew history! What a blessing the French Revolution was when the infamous tyranny and callousness of the rich and powerful were punished in blood! What a blessing the righteous judgments of God upon evil cities and decadent countries have been in all ages of human history! The progress of the human race has depended upon the severe action of the moral laws which have delivered righteous men and have been the enemies to all unrighteousness. License to sin and immunity from the punishment of sin are not God's government, and are not the illustration but the contradiction of love. When we see that terrible judgments are intended to cleanse the world and to save nations, when none of us is accustomed to condemn or would on any account reverse this action, we begin to understand that the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane and

on the Cross of Calvary may fall in with the system of moral government. Were the sin of the soul loosed without pain and without cost, then God's dealings with the individual would be on another principle from His dealings with the race.

Again, when a man asks for forgiveness, his own conscience comes into play, and he is not willing to be forgiven in a light and careless fashion. He desires to have his case settled according to the principles of righteousness; and if he is to be set free, to have the sanction of the eternal law. If I have a quarrel with a moral law, let that quarrel be fairly fought out and settled, so that I may look the law in the face, and have this law on my side for ever. Let me come in by the front door when I return to my Father's house, with all the servants to bid me welcome, and not creep in by some back entrance as a tolerated criminal. Were a criminal to be dismissed from a court simply because the judge was too sentimental to punish him, then the judge would be instantly removed from the bench, who had let loose guilty and impenitent criminals upon society; and the criminal himself,

if there were any sense of rightness in him, would leave the court unsatisfied and ashamed. It is not in this easy way that the problem of sin can be settled and the relation of the sinner to the moral world adjusted. Conscience demands that law shall be honoured and vindicated even when the vindication must be at one's own cost, and conscience is a competent commentator upon the meaning of Christ's sufferings. When I see my Elder Brother leave the Father's house and all its peace and come into this life with all its sin in order to take on Him the burden of my guilt and the punishment of my sin, and when I see Him fulfilling the demands of righteousness and expiating upon the largest scale its penalty, then I also can see Him take the moral laws of the universe and write them in letters of gold upon the sky. If they were once broken, they have now been glorified; and if they insisted on their just rights, they have now received them in His Cross and Passion, and as I behold this immense sacrifice, I can see dimly, no doubt, but quite certainly, that upon this ground the eternal Judge may lessen my liability not to righteousness but to punishment, and in speaking

forgiveness to me can give rest to the conscience within my heart.

Against this doctrine of forgiveness in its unrestrained freeness and its vicarious reference, it might be alleged that if forgiveness is to be given after this fashion to every man that asks it from a broken heart, the end will not be righteousness, but unrighteousness. If one be so lightly loosed from the penalty of his sins, and especially if this same penalty be laid upon another, then the forgiven person will argue, 'I am forgiven, and I am free to sin, and however I sin I shall not be punished'; and so because grace has abounded sin will much more abound. This is in its own way logical, and sounds reasonable, but, fortunately for the dignity of human nature, life is not ruled by logic, and men are not always so bad as by logic they ought to be. If any one indeed does argue along this line, then it may fairly be presumed that he has never been forgiven. He is not in the state of mind upon which forgiveness depends; he is in the state of mind for which there is no forgiveness. He is not in the Christian state, 'in Christ Jesus'; he is in a state of unblushing and calculating selfishness. If any one

imagines that he can so play fast and loose with the eternal law and ever run when he is in danger behind the Cross of Christ as to a city of refuge, then he will discover that the Cross will itself be the strictest of all laws and Christ the most merciless of all judges. If any man be certain of condemnation in this world and in the one to come, it is the man who proposes to make the sufferings of Christ the shelter of his own sins and the Son of God the servant of iniquity. With the vast majority of people forgiveness will not lead to a bad life, it will be the certain beginning of the best life, and that because we are men made in God's own image, however the image may have been defiled, and because after all we are not liars and not cowards. Out of a hundred men who have been forgiven by their fellow-men under circumstances of great generosity there may be one who afterwards will lift up his hand against his benefactor and will trade upon his clemency, but we do not judge the race by one scoundrel out of a hundred, and it is fair to consider that man to be a slander upon human nature. Should you wish to make the other ninety and nine hate the sin wherewith they

sinned and bind them to their benefactor in gratitude for all the years to come, this will be best accomplished by their forgiveness. Whatever sins they may afterwards commit they will never wantonly insult again the mercy which has been so ready and so unbounded. Within the lowest forms of human nature there remains an inherent nobility and susceptibility to gratitude, and to that the mercy of God has appealed, and has not appealed in vain.

The idea that free forgiveness leads to unholy living has been contradicted by history from end to end. The theology of Jesus' day was accustomed to deal out forgiveness in exchange for certain works, and the result was hypocrisy of life and hardness of heart. Jesus used to say, 'Thy sins be forgiven, go in peace,' to people who had sinned desperately, and the result was holiness. The Roman philosophers laid down laws of good living and severe conditions of life, and the end thereof was the astounding corruption of Roman society; St. Paul went everywhere preaching the grace of God, and the result thereof was the salvation of a decadent world. Tetzel at the Reformation beat his drum in the market-

place and sold the forgiveness of sins for money, and owing to the work of such men religious society had become rotten to the core and was nigh to destruction; Luther declared that faith obtained mercy without terms, and the Reformation was as much a reformation of morals as it was of doctrine. In our day there are two schools of preaching divided by a clear line. One says, Cultivate your character and repair your faults and discharge the charities of life and aim at ideal ends. The other school says, You are a sinner, and have been beaten in the great spiritual conflict. God in Christ forgives the guilt of your sin and bids you go in peace. Live from that point forward, not as the slave of the law, but as its servant for love's sake. Which school has been associated with the great revivals of religion, which school has fostered the deeper piety, which school has swept everything before it when its doctrine has been preached by a man of Christian compassion and stalwart faith?

Forgiveness has never been lightly bestowed because forgiveness is never bestowed alone. Before forgiveness repentance travels and ever afterwards repentance is the handmaid of mercy.

With forgiveness comes holiness, and holiness is the only certain evidence of forgiveness. No man ever obtains forgiveness except at one place —before the cross of Christ; no man can ever verify forgiveness except in one place—within his own heart. No one is ready for forgiveness who has not repented; no one has received forgiveness who is not being sanctified.

REGENERATION

IV

REGENERATION

JOHN FOSTER, one of the most virile of religious thinkers, and one of the most suggestive of essayists, had a great aversion to certain forms of expression which were much in vogue amongst some pious people of his day, and declared that, if possible, he would expunge them from every book by Act of Parliament, and often said, 'We want to put a new face upon things.' Many would agree with Foster, for they believe that in our age the cause of faith would be much served if the hackneyed terms of religion were gathered together and cast into the depths of the sea. Religious phrases remind one of those banknotes which the traveller receives in Scotland, and which he handles with much reserve. No doubt they were once new, and then, it is to be presumed, they were clean and crisp, but after they have passed through many hands, some

very greasy and unsavoury, the writing becomes illegible, and the notes themselves have an evil smell. Once a phrase was the symbol for a spiritual reality, and it was used in burning sincerity by good men. By and by the multitude got hold of it, and misapplied and vulgarised the noble words until they ceased to have force, and clever writers, anxious to point their gibe at the party of piety, found their opportunity. Lord Clarendon, the Royalist historian of the Civil War, makes himself merry about the Puritan phrase 'seeking God,' yet could anything be more worthy of a human being than to embark upon this quest and to agonise until heaven had been taken by storm? What, however, worked in Clarendon's mind, and is ever in the minds of the satirists of religion, was the hypocrisy of men to whom God had long ceased to be the portion of their heart, and had become simply a catchword of common speech. When a phrase is new, it is certain to be real; when it grows old, it is apt to sink into cant. It is, however, to be remembered that although our banknote be worn so thin that it hardly holds together, and is so soiled that we hesitate to touch it, that bit of

paper still retains a definite value, and, if you go into things, it still represents the same amount of gold. When one comes on a phrase in religious literature, and when one finds it largely in use amongst religious people, however abused that phrase may be, or however distasteful to our refinement, let him be sure that phrase stands for a fact. Human souls have, one day, seen this, felt this, wanted this, or else they had not coined this term, and it had not been freely circulated. In proportion to their commonness, the words of religion are an evidence of the facts of religion.

Take, for instance, the word 'regeneration,' or what is often (although inaccurately) considered its synonym, 'conversion.' We have heard people divided into converted and unconverted, and we have resented the arrogance of the preacher who dared to make this deep-cut distinction between a mass of human beings, some of whom might be very good, a few of whom might be very bad, but the most of whom, as we said, with a fine consciousness of insight, were half and between. We may have been asked ourselves whether we were converted,

and we were angry because a frail and, perhaps, foolish brother man had sought to lift the veil from the holy of holies in our souls, and to enter with obtrusive foot. This, however, does not touch the point, which is that there must be such an experience in religion, or else the word would not have come into existence, and that the experience is of elemental importance. As a matter of fact, this word describes with perfect accuracy one of the deepest and truest, one of the most lasting and fruitful events in the history of the soul. What one has to do is to exchange the worn-out paper for the precious gold, or, to vary the illustration, to mark where the float is dancing on the surface of the water, and to search below in the depths for the hidden treasure.

When one speaks about regeneration, and speaks about it as if it were the same thing as conversion, it is necessary to make a distinction in the interests of theology, which is the ordered science of religion. Any one reading the Puritan divines of the seventeenth century, and their pupils of our own time, will be apt to discover that they used the two words as interchangeable,

and, in so doing, they confused the two sides of one great event. Regeneration, and here I substantially quote from Aubrey Moore, who was too soon lost to theology and the Church on earth, is really God's act as much as is creation; conversion implies a conscious act of responsibility as we are enabled by God's grace. You cannot tell a man to be born again, you can tell him to turn round: being born again he is able to turn round. The man himself does not know when he is born again: he knows when the change in his life begins. Conversion proves regeneration: regeneration enables conversion. Regeneration is once, and never again: conversion may have a definite and marked beginning; it may also be repeated. Every great moment in sanctification may be called a conversion, and, therefore, Jesus said to Nicodemus that he must be born again, but commanded Peter that when he was converted he should strengthen the brethren. Conversion, therefore, is the human side of regeneration, and it is in the sense of conversion that we are now treating regeneration.

It is always a recommendation of a Christian

doctrine that it should not merely be a theory of the Schools, but that it should embody a desire of the human heart and an experience of the human life, and, upon the face of it, regeneration is one of the most fascinating and fondest ideals that ever has presented itself to our minds. It is not to be supposed that Nicodemus in his interview with Jesus was so utterly foolish as to confound the physical birth of a child with the spiritual birth of a soul. When he spoke of a man becoming a child and entering again into his mother's womb, he was stating in figurative terms the immense difficulty of spiritual regeneration. It was, to his mind, as incredible, this spiritual rebirth, as would be a physical rebirth, but in expressing his incredulity he revealed the longing of his heart. One is convinced, as he speaks, that in quiet hours this Jewish rabbi realised the weariness of his outworn faith, and rebelled against the bonds of Pharisaic custom. Beside Jesus, as he had seen the Master preaching in the Temple, he was condemned, because Jesus saw the things which he had not eyes to see, and heard the things which he had not ears to hear. Beside Jesus he was blind and deaf,

he was decrepit and ready to die. If it were only possible that a man, tired of his creed and tired of his habits, could begin life again as a young child, full of wonder and full of love! This was the fond dream of Nicodemus's heart; but how could it ever come to pass that this *blasé* Hebrew scholar would become like one of the young children who sang in the Temple choir? Is not this a natural and pathetic desire which visits various kinds of men in their best hours, and which floats before them like a vision of the fairy world? When a young man holds in his arms a little child, and looks upon its smiling, innocent face, there come up before his mind the sins of the past and put him to secret confusion. If he only could be washed clean again, not only from the stain of sin but from its insidious power, not only from that, but also from its very recollection! if he only were a child again! When an old man lays his hand upon the head of his grandchild, and hears the child talk with simple faith of God and of heaven, then he bitterly regrets the worldliness and sordidness of his soul, and would give much to have that child's fresh outlook upon

this world which is, and the world which is to come. With both, the young man and the old man, the desire is the same, to begin again a new, fresh, hopeful life. The action of degeneration we have too sadly learned in our own souls: our desire, whether we confess it or not, is for regeneration, and therefore the Christian doctrine of rebirth is one of the most spiritual aspirations of the human heart.

Nor is this word less acceptable because it is so thorough, since regeneration is never to be confounded with reformation. The former is used of the spiritual world, the latter of the moral. The former has to do with the soul, where are the springs of life; the latter has to do with conduct, which is only a form of life. In regeneration the old vessel is not repaired and repainted, it is rather remelted and remoulded, and the necessity for this entire and unflinching process lies in the constitution of human nature. No change is worth the name which begins from without and works inward; every change which is to accomplish a perfect result must begin within and work outward. Behind a man's speech lie his thoughts, and behind his thoughts

lies his mind, which is the man himself. Each individual has his own mental shape by which his words and his actions are regulated, so that although he may school himself at times to speak a foreign tongue, it will ever be with his own accent; and although he may train himself to an alien course of action, he will ever revert to his natural habits. It is even doubtful whether a man of one mental fashion can ever understand a man of another; it is likely that they will be to each other an enigma for all time, perpetually misunderstanding and mistaking one another. To the ordinary Englishman, a Frenchman will always appear more or less a fribble, and his high spirit and fine taste will be hidden; while an Englishman will always appear to the ordinary Frenchman as little less than a barbarian, stolid and coarse, and the English sense of justice and brave perseverance will also be hidden. Both men would have to be reborn, each within the country of the other, to be able to understand his neighbour. One who is the son of a rich man, and who has been accustomed to look at life from the standpoint of a capitalist, will never appreciate the grievances and ambitions of the

proletariat; and a son of the people will, through no blame of his own, have wrong-headed ideas about those who dress in purple and fine linen. A thoughtful person can hardly express himself to one who is uneducated, and a Philistine rebels, as by instinct, against the manners and attitude of a cultured man. One class would have to be recast before it could enter into the mind of another; and if this be true with regard to nationality, social position, and education, it is ten times more true in the matter of religion. Religious and irreligious persons belong to different spheres which hardly have a common frontier, which each has its own language and its own habits. Bunyan, in his autobiography, relates how he saw certain old women sitting in the sun in a street of Bedford, and heard them speaking together about the affairs of the soul. They spoke his English tongue, and they were people of his own condition, but after hearing them he concluded that he knew nothing whatever about religion, for their words sounded strange in his ears, and they were talking of a country where he had never been. When St. Paul stood at the bar of the Roman judge, and

Felix looked at him from the judgment-seat, it was altogether impossible for Felix to appreciate the position of St. Paul, although the eloquence of the Apostle touched the Roman's heart, and it is evident that St. Paul was not able to estimate the time-serving disposition of the Roman official. St. Paul was concerned about Felix' soul, and Felix hoped that St. Paul would have offered him a bribe. They were strangers one to another, the one a citizen of this world which is passing away, the other a citizen of the world which remaineth for ever. The religious man has his own idea of God, and of right, and of humanity, but he has no means of making it plain to the irreligious man. The irreligious man wanders about outside the sphere of the religious man's ideas, as one travels round a cathedral seeing nothing but the confused scenes on the windows which he cannot recognise from the outside, and hearing the faint sound of praise which he does not understand. What is necessary for the man outside is to come inside, to be lifted out of his own sphere of thought into that of Christ, or, in other words, to be changed in the very centre of his being. This change is

the rebirth of Jesus' teaching which caught the imagination and excited the hope of Nicodemus. It is a birth which cannot be from beneath, it can only be from above. It is a rebirth which changes a man's attitude for ever and is the beginning of a new life. It is, of course, mysterious, but it is real, and without it there is no possibility of true religion. 'Blame not the word "conversion,"' says Carlyle in his *Sartor Resartus*, 'rejoice rather that such a word signifying such a thing has come to light in our modern era, though hidden from the wisest ancients. The old world knew nothing of conversion; instead of an Ecce Homo they had only some choice of Hercules. It was a new-attained progress in the moral development of man; hereby has the highest come home to the bosom of the most limited; what to Plato was but an hallucination, and to Socrates but a chimera, is now clear and certain to your Zinzendorfs, and the poorest of your Wesleys, and Pietists, and Methodists.'

Regeneration must be understood in a generous sense, and on no account must its form be limited, for there will be as many kinds of conversion as

there are kinds of men. Certainly there are at least four different types of conversion — four experiences by which men have passed from darkness into light—and one of the most striking is moral conversion. Within the Gospels the classical illustration will ever be St. Mary Magdalene, from whose life the chains of sin fell in an instant, and who passed at once from nameless degradation into the holiness of Jesus' fellowship. Outside the Gospels there is no more convincing illustration than the experience of St. Augustine, who was held in the bonds of sensual sin long after he was convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that Christianity was the true faith. While he was bitterly lamenting his miserable condition, he heard a voice—and who shall say that it did not sound?—calling upon him to take up the Holy Scriptures and to read a passage that will ever be associated with his name; 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof.' He adds: 'I had neither desire nor need to read further.

As I finished the sentence, as though the light of peace had been poured into my heart, all the shadows of doubt dispersed. Thus Thou convertedst me unto Thyself, so that I sought neither wife nor any hope of this world, standing in that rule of faith in which Thou so many years before hadst revealed me to my mother.' From that time forward St. Augustine may have sinned, as the best of men fall from their perfection, but never after the fashion of former days. Against the sin which once enslaved him he never ceased to testify, and he passed to the opposite extreme of asceticism. His experience was that of one who had turned completely round, and for whom in a moment everything became new, so that the most dangerous and corrupting of habits, the habits of sensual sin, passed utterly away as though it had never been.

Another form of conversion is intellectual, where one emerges from the darkness of error into the light of the truth. Nathanael had puzzled himself regarding the signs of the Messiah until he refused to believe that the Messiah had come, but suddenly, on his meeting with Jesus, all his

former preconceptions passed away, and he saw, as by a flash, the character of the Messiah in the face of Jesus. One minute he was convinced that no good thing could come out of Nazareth, and the next he was confessing, with utter gladness of heart, 'Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel.' Martin Luther, burdened with the sense of his own sins and longing for the peace of holiness, made his pilgrimage to the city which was the capital of Christendom and the home of the Vicar of Christ. Anxious to use every means of grace, so that he might on no account miss salvation, he was ascending the steps of Pilate's staircase upon his knees with a crowd of pilgrims, when the word came to him, 'The just shall live by faith.' He rose without delay and left the place, and in that hour he was delivered from the superstition which had held his reason in bondage. The whole system of his theology crumbled into pieces, and a new system took its place, as when the darkness flees before the rising of the sun.

The third form of conversion is not so much moral nor intellectual as it is practical. As Jesus

walked upon the shore of the Galilean Lake He called Peter and John and commanded them to follow Him. They left their nets and followed Him upon the promise that instead of being fishermen on the Lake of Galilee they should become fishers of men the world over. This was the great event in their lives, and from it sprang that spiritual character and magnificent service by which they have laid all generations under a debt of gratitude, and by which they now sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. It would be only a matter of a few seconds —'Follow Me,' and they followed Him — but centuries have not exhausted the content of that word. A young man of Assisi is banqueting with certain companions, and is visited with such strange thoughts that he withdraws himself from their fellowship and goes into the open air. As he stands beneath the clear Umbrian sky, with the stars looking down upon him, he is moved for the first time in his life by love, and surrenders himself to her service. He goes along the road with his companions, and they charge him with being a lover, and he confesses that he has found his bride. They do not understand,

but in after years it appears that his bride was Poverty, whom none had wooed since Jesus lived, and to whom St. Francis was to give his life. Can any one doubt that the decision of that evening was St. Francis' conversion, from which, as from a spring that had arisen at the touch of Christ's crucified hands, there flowed a stream of charity which has made beautiful the history of the Church, and surely has come from the very heart of Jesus Himself?

There is one other type of conversion, which may be called spiritual, when all the truth which a person possesses is changed into life, and one passes from forms to reality. This was the experience of that chief Pharisee whom Jesus met on the way to Damascus; and this was the experience of the greatest of Scottish divines—when Dr. Chalmers, who had been an orthodox theologian and a clean-living man, but formal and cold-hearted, realised for the first time the meaning of two magnitudes, the shortness of time and the greatness of eternity. In this conversion the beautifully-shaped marble of a correct and traditional religion suddenly glows, and is touched with life as when the statue

turned into a living being. It matters little through what avenue the Spirit of God enters into a man's nature if only the Spirit has free access and accomplishes His great work, and the man is born again of the Holy Ghost, and re-made by the very power of God.

Various interesting questions may be raised regarding the time of regeneration, and, again, we ought to allow a great latitude in experience. There are doubtless some, and they are highly favoured, who have hardly been born into this world according to the flesh, before they are born again according to the Spirit, who from their first years have their faces turned towards God and who always bear the likeness of His beloved Son. For them there is no double life, and for them, therefore, there is no marked change, but all their life flows in one direction, from earth to heaven. With others there has been no agony of doubt, and no crisis of faith, for they have passed so imperceptibly into light that they cannot tell the day when they were born again. Doubtless there was such a day, for they are evidently regenerated; but when they awoke, the sun had long risen, and their chamber was

flooded with light. Others there are, and not a few, who can tell with certainty before God and man the day when they experienced the great change, and their souls were born again of the Holy Ghost. It is not for one moment to be supposed that their account of the beginning of the spiritual life is only an illusion of fanaticism. There is nothing incredible in the direction of a life being changed within the space of an hour, and, indeed, the great events of life are instantaneous. Many things have gone before this sudden conversion, so that a person may have been prepared for that moment during years of doubt and trial and discipline. Many things will follow after, before the tiny seed of life comes to its full height and perfect shape, but the actual conversion may be as rapid as the opening of a flower in the morning, as a breath of wind upon the surface of the sea. Nor is this experience contrary to human nature or without its parallels in other provinces of life. A son has played the prodigal and broken his mother's heart; he returns on the news of her illness and enters her chamber to find her dead. By her bedside he kneels, and in that hour the power

of a besetting sin is broken, and he leaves the room invulnerable against its temptation. A lad, unconscious of his talents and feeling about for his lifework, picks up a book of science, and ere he has read a page he understands his calling. A man with disengaged heart and careless of social ties sees a woman's face, and the current of his life sets in a new direction. No one can explain how the change is effected, no one can describe his own experience. The wind blew where it listed, and it was viewless, but the sound was in the heart, and the power was in the life. Savonarola was checked in love, and turned aside from the world: he gave himself to the service of God, and in the end sealed his testimony with his life. Once and again, in the Duomo of Florence, he referred to his conversion, and he used to say with emphasis, 'A word did it,' but he never told the word, and that word must always be a secret between a man and his God.

THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

V

THE VICARIOUS SACRIFICE OF JESUS CHRIST

WHEN Caiaphas, the titular Jewish High Priest and the agent of a much more crafty man, the actual High Priest Annas, laid down this principle in the High Council of the nation, that it was expedient one man should die for the nation, and used it as an argument for the judicial murder of Jesus Christ, he afforded a remarkable illustration of how one may mean what is utterly false and may at the same time say what is profoundly true. Caiaphas in this utterance was at once defending the most wicked act in all human history, and declaring one of the most precious truths in all human experience. What he meant was that it would be a good stroke of policy to silence Jesus for ever, because Jesus was teaching unwelcome truths, and might deliver His fellow-countrymen from

the yoke of the Temple exactions. What really happened as the result of his action was that Jesus overcame the power of sin upon the Cross of Calvary and achieved the spiritual deliverance of the human race. Many good things, as, for instance, the English Reformation, have sprung from the basest of motives, and one must very carefully distinguish between the malign scheme of the Jewish ruler, which is ever to be reprobated, and its splendid results in the redemption of Jesus Christ. For God made light to spring out of darkness, and where sin abounded grace has much more abounded. It indeed has come to pass in the crucifixion that where sin reached its most shameless and victorious height the Grace of God accomplished His most benevolent and fruitful purpose.

Certainly it was not expedient that Christ should die in the sense that Caiaphas intended, for whatever we may think of vicarious sacrifice, we must hold fast by the principle that for a judge to send an innocent man to death is a most unjust thing and can never be excused, and also by the principle that nothing which is unjust can ever be expedient or can be justified

by its results. When the Pharisees formed a dishonourable alliance with the priests, and the priests corrupted Judas Iscariot, and the priests and the Pharisees together accomplished the death of Jesus Christ, they committed the basest crime and they earned a most deserved condemnation. The crucifixion of Jesus through the plotting of these men was a colossal outrage upon the laws of their own State and upon the traditions of the nation. It ended, as by a natural consequence, in the historical and indescribable punishment of the destruction of Jerusalem. Should it happen, as it sometimes does in human life, that a crime produces good fruit, that blessing will be shared by many, but the perpetrator of the crime will only have the punishment; and so it has come to pass that the world goes on a pilgrimage to the Cross of Jesus and returns with the gift of everlasting life, but the names of the men who caused that Cross to be erected, and, using Roman hands, caused Christ to be nailed thereon, shall be a byword and a reproach unto all generations.

While this is true, and must ever be kept in mind, might it not be expedient that an innocent

man, against whom no charge of sin could be proven and whose goodness deserved only the highest reward, should take his own life in his hands and lay it down of his own accord on behalf of the people? Had the priests and Pharisees been candid and honourable men, they would have heard Christ gladly, and would have treated Him with all honour, so that He never should have known want, and they would have shielded Him from the shadow of insult, so that He would have had authority in the land. Suppose, however, that Jesus did not wish to guard Himself from suffering, and to live at ease, but was willing to be betrayed and outraged and crucified in devotion to the will of God and for the good of His fellow-men, is not this an altogether beautiful thing? And if the human race on their part, realising the immense victory of the Cross of Jesus Christ, and feeling their constant need of Him, be willing throughout all the ages to take the gift which He has won by His Passion and by His Death, may not this also be expedient and just? This question appeals both to the intellect and to the conscience, and upon the answer depends

whether we can accept the doctrine of Jesus' vicarious sacrifice.

The question has the greater weight because no one can estimate the nature and force of Christianity without discovering that in the last issue all its benefits have been won as it were at the point of the Cross and that all it offers springs from the Fountain of Calvary. When St. Paul summed up the energy of Christianity in the Cross of Christ, he not only used a very felicitous image, which will ever cling to the memory and inspire the heart, but he also went to the very root of things, and stated the inwardness of our religion. What is true of Christ is also true of Christ's Cross, that it is the living Way by which the human soul passes into the fellowship of the Father. It stands out in religious experience on the border between light and darkness like the frontier post between Canada and the United States in former days, so that when the fugitive slave passed this point he became a freed man and no one could afterwards enslave him. It is at the Cross that the terror of guilt and the shackles of moral bondage fall from off a man's soul and he enters into the

liberty of the sons of God, a man whose sin is forgiven and whose iniquity is cleansed. Is not the Cross also the source of all heavenly thoughts, of all spiritual reinforcements, of all gracious aspirations? By the contact of this Cross, as we become its partakers in daily life, we are raised above the things of sense and enter into the fulness of life. Just in proportion as the disciple is crucified in that proportion is he a Christian, and just as he takes his standpoint by the Cross has he a true understanding of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. As one considers the chief doctrines of our faith, regeneration, justification, and sanctification, he cannot but see them hanging as fruits upon the bitter tree of the Cross, which was no sooner planted than it began to grow and to bud, so that its leaf has never faded and its fruit has never failed.

Some people, however, are face to face with a certain ethical difficulty and cannot in honesty pass on without its settlement—whether in truth, if you go into the heart of the matter, this vicarious sacrifice was not unjust, and whether it is possible that any person can be saved from sin

in an unjust way. This difficulty resolves itself into two questions, and the first is this: Is it right that one who has made great sacrifices should not enjoy his just reward, and one who has made none should be endowed with that reward?

Granted, it may be said, that it was an altogether becoming thing that Jesus should sacrifice Himself, and granted that immense benefit has come to the race from His death, is this sacrifice founded on any principle of justice, and had the race any right to the benefit it has grasped? When a person asks this question, it is evident that he has a certain idea of the conditions of human life, which is in the background of his mind, and to which he is accustomed to refer. He thinks of each person as a separate unit, beginning life on his own account, living on his own account, dying on his own account. He imagines that every man stands in his own place, and that his destiny is absolutely independent of his nearest neighbour. If the man mixes a bitter cup, that cup must he drink; if it be a sweet cup, that cup shall be his. None can exchange the cup, bitter or sweet, with

another man. What we sow in the springtime we must reap in the days of harvest, and there is no power of interference anywhere so that the man who sowed tares shall receive wheat any more than the man that sowed wheat shall be cursed with tares. Unto every man his due, is surely the principle of Eternal Law; and if that be the case, how can any man stand in Christ's place, or Christ stand in any man's place?

Regarding this idea of life it seems perfectly fair that if you have made your bed you must lie on it, and if you have sown the wind you must reap the whirlwind. One may admit that it not only seems right but that it is logically right, and that life ought theoretically to be constructed on this individualistic principle. Every person, however, is aware how little the logic of the schools has to do with the practical rules of life, and one is bound to inquire whether as a matter of fact life really does rest upon the independence of the individual. Perhaps it may in the planet Mars, but it certainly does not in this world. We have no experience of this absolute individualism, this separation of one

man's destiny from another, this rigid recompense whereby every one receives exactly what he has earned and nothing which he has not earned. What we do see is men, women and children so inextricably linked together that one man falling carries down twenty with him, and one man standing fast in his integrity bears the strain of twenty other lives. What we realise in our day is not individualism, but rather collectivism, which means that the race is not made up of an innumerable number of single lives which have no connection one with another, but that the race is a huge body with common feelings both of joy and sorrow, so that if one member be injured, all the other members shall suffer; and if one member be strong, all the others shall share in the strength.

When an intelligent person takes an intellectual or ethical objection to vicarious sacrifice, one would imagine that this principle were a pure monopoly of theological speculation, and that he had never seen it acting in his own life. Has this man owed nothing to the services and to the sacrifices of others who have gone before him and whom perhaps he has never known?

Was he not brought into being at the grave peril and with the bitter anguish of his mother? May he not have been a sickly child, of whom people said that he could never be reared nor reach the estate of manhood, and he has been reared and has come to be a man through the sleepless nights and weary days of his mother, through her loss of pleasure and sacrifice of ease? Is he not then a fruit of vicarious sacrifice in one of its purest and most pathetic forms? This man also is the citizen of a nation, and has a share in the government of its affairs, but he is aware that there was a day when his ancestors had no voice in government and were only bondsmen in their own land, at the mercy of every tyrant, political and ecclesiastical. How does it come to pass that this man has not only freedom of conscience but also freedom of action? Has he won his just rights by his own exertions and by his own suffering? Is it not the case that men to whom God gave the spirit of patriotism long ago were willing to sacrifice their goods and even their lives for blessings which they did not enjoy themselves, and which, except with the eye of prophecy, they could not see? These

blessings were bought with their blood and they are enjoyed by their children, and none of us objects that this gain is an evidence of injustice. How does it come to pass that one lad begins life in abject poverty and in moral misery while another has the advantage of good education and a careful training? That one starts as it were with an accumulated capital of goodness, and the other starts hopelessly bankrupt? Certainly the one has no blame, and certainly the other has no credit. Before each lad lived his father—the father of one lad a careless and selfish man, gratifying his own pleasures and his own sins, the other a hard-working and severe-living man, thinking not of himself but of his children, and willing to suffer if so be that they enjoy. They have enjoyed, and now this lad's successful career is an illustration and a vindication of vicarious sacrifice. Is it not right that a man should suffer for others, and do we not admire his suffering? Is it not allowable that another should receive the benefit of that sacrifice, and are we not all with perfect satisfaction of conscience debtors on the ordinary plane of life through vicarious sacrifice?

Some years ago, to condense the whole argument in a single illustration, a merchant vessel went out from a port on the western coast and was driven upon the rocks in one of the great storms. Boats could not live in such a sea, and it was a question whether any man could swim through the surf to the shore. One after another each man of the crew put on his life-belt and jumped overboard till at last the captain only remained upon the deck of the vessel. No men in our commonwealth are more loyal to their duty, or discharge their duty in a more unassuming way, than the captains of our merchant service. They are men who are willing to sacrifice everything, even unto their life, in fulfilment of their charge, who have learned the meaning of courage in a hard school. This man had already put on his belt and was about to make his fight for life, when out of the vessel somewhere there crept a poor lad and stood beside him. He was simply a street arab who had stowed himself away in the vessel, and now, under pressure of danger and in terror of life, had come upon the deck a miserable, helpless, shivering atom of human life. The captain

looked at him and looked at the surf, and there was not another life-belt. The captain had either to give him his belt and most likely be drowned, or save his own life and leave the lad to perish. This brave man put his life-belt on the lad and sent him overboard, so that the lad reached the shore while the captain himself perished in the waves. One of course may say that it had been better to let the boy perish, for what was he worth to the commonwealth, or even to himself? Would it not also have been a gain if the captain's life had been saved, for he was worth much to his family and to the State? It is, however, impossible to criticise such conduct. Our hands are not steady enough to hold the scales before such magnificent heroism. Whatever one may think of vicarious sacrifice, of its expediency or of its justice, there is no man who would not give the crown to the memory of such a gallant seaman. It is therefore perfectly clear, when one closes the Bible and turns from the life of Christ, that one does not go outside the law of vicarious sacrifice, but that in great straits of life a man still stands in the stead of his neighbour, so that he endures for him, and even

dies for him, while he for whom he dies is endowed with great privileges and inestimable gifts. This is the law which runs through human life, which can be verified in every street of every city, and in every home where there is any nobility of thought.

Is not this also a beautiful law which endears unto us all the person who has obeyed it, and gives him his due reward of affection? Consider, for instance, the Divine Person Who made Himself the Victim, and so wrought salvation for His race. He accepted the scourge and the nails, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto the Cross, and now He has been highly exalted and has obtained a Name which is above every name. Without the Cross there had been no Son of God within our knowledge, and no Son of Man within our heart; there had been no Head of the Church without the Cross. Jesus had been without His praise and without His power had He not been crucified upon Calvary. No injustice, therefore, has been done to Him Who suffered our disabilities, no injustice to them who have received His benefits. No message is so swift and certain as Love; no Love has been so strong as that which

has on it the imprint of the wounded hands and feet. No example is so inspiring as that of selflessness, none so quick to make us brave and pure. The greatest regenerative power in the world is love, and it was love which made Christ surrender His heavenly glory and lay down His life for the world.

It is, however, impossible to shut one's eyes to the fact that at one point the sacrifice of Christ has no illustration in human life, and, indeed, could not have any. A second question, therefore, arises. Can one who has sinned be counted righteous because one who has not sinned accepted his penalty? Jesus was without question a martyr in His devotion to the will of God and to the welfare of man, and from His martyrdom have flowed constant and inestimable blessings. We have learned the love of God, and the glory of humanity, the type of the perfect life and the unspeakable degradation of sin. We have received an example of high living and the inspiration of a great leader. The best things have flowed to us through Jesus' sacrifice as on lower levels of life great benefits have come to us through political and social martyrs. No martyr, how-

ever, has ever suffered literally in another's stead, so that he took the place of the person for whom he suffered and the person for whom he suffered stepped into his place. No one in human experience has taken upon him the guilt of a brother man, and has expiated that guilt after a legal fashion, so that the innocent was treated as guilty, and the guilty has been treated as innocent. This is the last extreme, and it is also the crown of vicarious sacrifice, and this is the measure of the vicarious sacrifice of Christ.

No person can read Jesus' life and have any doubt of His perfect sinlessness, for He was exposed to the fiercest criticism and was followed at every turn by the most watchful enemies, and yet He was able to give the challenge and ask any one to convict Him of sin. From every side witnesses arose willing and unwilling to bear witness to His innocence; not only men and women who believed in Him and loved Him, but also the traitor who betrayed Him, and the judge who sent Him to His death. Alone of all the sons of men He walked in white unstained and radiant through the miry paths of life, and

when He died He died as a just man and as the Son of God.

We cannot read His life without also observing that, from the beginning to the end, He was treated as an unjust person would have been, and in the end as the very chief of sinners. The consideration given to the poorest of men was denied to Him, and the justice, both of Jewish and of Roman laws, was broken that He might be condemned. By every scheme of iniquity was His condemnation secured, with every circumstance of cruelty was His death carried out. It is an outstanding fact that the most innocent of all men shared the fate of the most guilty. Jesus did not at any time complain of this transposition of lot, but throughout His whole life accepted it as His calling of God. It was for other men to live, and Jesus constantly insisted upon the glory of life. It was for Himself to die, and the only death about which He spake was His own upon the Cross. His death and the life of His disciples were connected together in His mind, inasmuch as He died that they might live, and the cross to which He moved was the gateway of life everlasting for the world. The reader of Jesus' life

will also notice that His death was invested with a mysterious pain and horror, so that not only was its shadow flung across the three years of His public life, and, it may be, earlier days, but He came to regard the approach of the Cross with sinking of heart. History records the bravery and peace of soul with which the witnesses of Christ have looked forward to the scaffold, so that they slept the night before execution, and anticipated death with a high heart. This man, braver than them all, agonised the night through before His death, so that He cried aloud and sweated great drops of blood. This cannot mean that He had not the faith and resolution of St. Peter or St. Paul; this must mean that His death had in it a shame and an agony which were unknown, and never could be known, to any of His disciples.

We can in measure understand why Jesus agonised in Gethsemane when we listen to what He said in the Upper Room. As He gave the bread and wine, the symbol of His love and of His death, to His disciples, He declared that His blood was to be shed not simply for their good and in revelation of the divine love, but for the

remission of their sin. Because He died their sin would be forgiven, and therefore, before dying, He must have taken upon Him the load of their guilt, and in dying He must have expiated the same, according to the demands of everlasting law and according to the will of God. This Good Shepherd, as He explained, would lay down His life for the sheep. He would give His life as a ransom for many. If, indeed, the sin of the human race gathered in one huge penalty and cloud of guilt upon the head of Jesus Christ, then it is no wonder that He suffered in Gethsemane and besought the Father that the cup should pass from Him, nor that on the Cross, as He realised in His heart the horror of the world's sin, He should have cried, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'

This explanation of Jesus' vicarious sacrifice has, of course, raised great difficulties in the mind, and we are accustomed to ask how it is possible that an innocent person should be considered guilty, and a guilty person should be accepted as innocent. And we are constantly insisting that there is no parallel in human life to this transaction, and that such an interchange would

never be tolerated in any earthly court of justice. Certainly there is no exact parallel, and human justice must not be administered after this fashion; but there is in human life an approximate parallel which has its own significance, not so much as an argument, but rather as an illustration. Is it not the case that husbands and wives are so closely united that in society the guilt of the man casts its shadow over the woman, and she may suffer in human judgment who herself has done no wrong? Is it not also the case that a son who has done wrong and given great offence to society is pardoned and restored to favour on account of the character and services of his father? Not only have we received benefit which we have never earned through the sacrifice of other people, not only have we disabilities which we have not deserved through the weakness of other people, but there are circumstances where the shadow of a crime not his own darkens another man's life, and where the credit of goodness not his own has cleansed the shadow from a sinner's life.

We ought, however, always to remember that it is not only not necessary to show the exact parallel between the conditions of human life and

the conditions of Jesus' sacrifice, but we are the rather bound to believe that if we are to enter into the heart of this sacrifice, we must be prepared to find it far transcending the province of human life. And the ground for this expectation lies in the person of Christ. It is impossible to understand in any degree the sacrifice of Jesus at its deepest without understanding in some degree Himself, for this was not an ordinary man who suffered and died upon the Cross. This man took upon Him not simply the nature of an individual, but the nature of our race. From all ages He was the Archetype of humanity, and in the fulness of time He was revealed as its Head. In Him humanity was gathered up and fulfilled, so that He is related to every man that was ever born, and under Him as a Head all men are gathered. While it is true that He offered Himself a sacrifice for men, it is also true that in Him each member of His body was crucified and died, so that the expiation upon the Cross was the expiation not of a single person, but of the whole humanity in Him Who was its Representative and Priest. As the several members of the race are intimately connected, so is the race and Jesus

one. What He does for us He does as our Kinsman and Brother.

It has also been urged with much reason that, even although Jesus was willing to sacrifice Himself as many a person would be willing to do under conditions of human justice for a criminal that was loved, it is incredible that the Eternal Judge should ever consent to a transaction so unjust, and far less should give it His approving sanction. Is it not a censure on the Eternal Justice that Jesus should have been treated as the substitute for a guilty race, and should have been allowed to drink its bitter cup? One forgets that his mind is again held in bondage by the conditions and limitations of human life. Who is this Eternal Judge but the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Who is this Victim but the Eternal Son of God? It is, therefore, God Who judges, and it is, therefore, God Who suffers; and if the Judge Himself be willing to expiate the penalty, then surely law could not be more splendidly vindicated, and the high ends of justice more fully gained. If it be counted a noble thing in a lowly member of the human race to obey the law of sacrifice, is this

high achievement to be denied to God Himself? In all this universe is there to be only one person, not only absolved from this highest of laws, but also forbidden its fulfilment, and that person to be God? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that if the Cross had become the condition of ethical perfection in human life, it has also been all along the condition of the perfect holiness of God, so that the sacrifice of God in Jesus Christ His Son is the very crown and glory of the highest law?

It is for every person to settle with himself what he will do with this great sacrifice which has been offered by Jesus, according to the will of God, upon the Cross of Calvary, and with the innumerable benefits which this sacrifice has won. And here we find ourselves once more upon the plane of human life. We have the same liberty of choice with regard to the sacrifice of Christ that we have with regard to the sacrifice of patriots. Should it be our pleasure, we can avail ourselves of the liberty and of the right which men of old have won for our commonwealth and carry ourselves as free-born citizens, and accept the responsibility of our high citizenship. Or we

can carry ourselves as bondsmen, refusing any share in the government of the country and rendering no service. We can also accept with grateful hearts the spiritual blessings which are bestowed by the Cross, claiming the forgiveness of sins, and taking our place as the sons of God. Or we can prefer guilt to righteousness, and remain of our own will in the bondage of sin. Two things are certain, that no man can achieve his own salvation, and that our salvation has been accomplished by Jesus Christ. And still another thing is quite as certain, that by an act of consent any one can place himself within the merit of Jesus' sacrifice and serve himself an heir to its fulness of life. May it not be the case that our minds are clouded with darkness in this matter, because there is darkness in our hearts? Is it not possible that we are not able to believe in the vicarious sacrifice of Christ and are apt to consider it a thing altogether incredible because we ourselves are not willing to make any sacrifice and are leading utterly selfish lives? Is it not the case that, among women throughout the Christian world, it is the rarest thing to find that any one stumbles at the sacrifice of Christ?

and is it not the case that women, whether as mothers or daughters or wives, are daily making sacrifices that men will never make and which they cannot even imagine? A woman enters into the sacrifice of Christ and finds in it the expectation of her heart, since in that sacrifice God is only doing on the larger scale of His Deity what she is doing on the narrower scale of her human love. Should it be the case that any one of us is living in any known selfishness, then it will be utterly impossible for him to believe in the sacrifice of Christ, for his own selfishness will veil his mind and harden his heart. When one has given himself to the service of the Divine will, as did the Apostle of the Gentiles, without reserve, without pride, without regret, then he will pass with St. Paul into the heart of this mystery. It is in moments of self-sacrifice that the heart grows tender and darkness turns into light, and of a sudden we find ourselves beneath the kindly shadow of the Cross of Christ, which for ever stretches its arms over the human race with the benediction of its vicarious sacrifice.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

VI

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

CERTAIN doctrines of the Christian faith may be called Catholic because they are held by the whole Church of Christ throughout all her branches and amid all her controversies. They are so distinctly a part of Divine revelation and so inextricably woven into the experiences of the soul that to deny them were almost profane, and to ignore them is spiritual paralysis. Prominent in this class stand the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice upon the Cross, from which doctrines the Church departs at her peril, in which abiding she always triumphs. Any body of Christians which has denied the one or the other has gradually lost spiritual power, as when the sap returns to the trunk and the branches wither away; the history of the Christian Church bears witness alike to the

vitalising power of these doctrines and the death which befalls all who deny them. Certain doctrines, again, may be called provincial because they are held by some branches only of the one spiritual Church of Christ, and are overlooked or denied by others. No doubt they have their sanction in Holy Scripture, else they had never been accepted by saints and scholars, but their evidence is not so overwhelming as to compel general conviction. They have their vindication also in the experience of the soul, but they are not universal in their hold. An excellent illustration of this kind is the dogma of election, which has been more or less firmly held by the Puritan, and more or less distinctly denied by the Roman, pole of Christian thought, and which, sometimes for weal—the firm consolation of robust spirits; sometimes for woe—the bitter anxiety of those that were bowed down—has wielded an irresistible influence on those who lived within the memory of this generation.

There is a fashion in doctrine, and it may be frankly admitted that the majestic conception of Divine sovereignty has fallen on evil days, because it has either become obsolete, or it has

been turned into a reproach. Letters have always had their quarrel with this ancient faith from the days of the humanists, who saw its shadow cast over the careless gaiety of life in the period of the Renaissance; and in our time, notwithstanding the grim assistance of Carlyle, a Scot saturated with the Shorter Catechism, this doctrine has been unstrung and lost its grip in the pagan atmosphere of our strongest living poets and novelists. The rebirth of the Fatherhood of God in the theology of Maurice, and in the early books of George Mac Donald, powerfully affected the religious mind, and alienated it from this doctrine as it had been stated in past centuries. This revolt found an ally also in the teaching of pious but unlearned evangelists, who, it may be said without uncharitable reflection, did not perhaps grasp this doctrine, and who certainly judged it expedient to let the Divine decrees severely alone, and, instead of explaining the Will of God, to make their direct and affectionate appeal to the souls of men. Without recantation or explanation, the Puritan pulpit has quietly allowed the doctrine to fall into the background, so that Mr. Spurgeon was

the last preacher of the grand order to declare it without apology and to apply it to the upbuilding of faith, while a young modern would as soon think of discussing the identity of the Lost Ten Tribes as choosing election for the subject of a sermon. Persons of unblemished faith who would on no account deny or belittle what they regard as a truth of Holy Scripture, prefer that it should be kept in reserve, partly because it is one of the deep things of God which they do not hope to understand, partly because its treatment in the past has not been always for the comfort of the soul. One does not exaggerate, therefore, in saying that election is a forgotten and an opprobrious doctrine.

What this doctrine was in the days of its royalty there is little doubt, for men were not afraid to declare it or to place its meaning upon permanent record. Of course there were differences in the accidents of the doctrine, but none in its essence. Some stalwarts of unflinching logic might hold that the purpose of election preceded creation in order of thought, so that men were virtually called into existence by the will of God in order to be saved or in order to

be damned—which is surely the furthest reach of merciless reason within the range of human thought. Other divines of more fearful mind considered that the purpose of election followed the Fall in order of thought, so that from among those who had merited death God of His good pleasure called some unto life, and in this way they were understood to conserve the goodness of God, which at any rate had saved a few out of a multitude, which otherwise would all have perished. It might be also debated whether the sacrifice of Christ had reference only to the elect or whether its overflowing benefits blessed the outer circle of the non-elect with uncovenanted mercies; whether the offer of the Divine mercy ought to be made only to the few who were already in the purposes of God or whether the preacher might not be justified in extending this offer to all his hearers. Upon those points of speculation there were keen arguments, which to-day would be an anachronism, but which only proved to us the insatiable love of our fathers for metaphysical reasoning. But on the main subject of the doctrine there was absolute agreement. For any one to teach that God, foreseeing

those who should afterwards believe, elected them on that account unto salvation or that any one co-operated with the Divine Spirit in the work of salvation, was flagrant and unreasonable heresy. There were points of distinction within the outer frontiers of the doctrine, but the doctrine in any case stood fast with sharp, clear-cut outlines that God of His own will, and for no reason in themselves, called some to life and left others to death, and that according to the decrees of God it would happen to them do as they pleased, in this world and that which is to come.

As soon as this doctrine is stated one can understand how it came to excite such fierce antipathy and why it was placed more frequently than any other doctrine in the pillory of literature. It cannot be stated, however softened and disguised, without not only exposing itself to the criticism of reason, but also goading the moral sense into unflinching opposition. Not only has Calvinism laid itself open to satiric wit, which has ever played freely upon it, but it has also excited hot indignation because on the face of things this action of the Eternal seems to be so unfair, so arbitrary, so ungenerous—the policy

not of a gracious sovereign but of an irresponsible despot. No earthly parent dare cast so many of the children whom he has begotten upon the streets to starve and to perish, and cherish so many in his home, showering upon them the riches of his goodness, while he might have done well by them all. Any parent who should give such an illustration of partiality and injustice would be called to account, not only by public opinion, but by the laws of his country, and he could not escape in any case without earning disgrace and punishment. Is it not reasonable to argue that what would be unbefitting an earthly father is utterly impossible with God, and what would be worthy of the father of our flesh will be surpassed beyond our imagination by the Father of our spirit?

Besides—and this is a very damning reflection on any doctrine — was not this belief in the irresponsibility and sovereignty of God calculated to have an injurious and immoral effect alike upon those who were His beneficiaries and those who were His victims? Could anything be more certain to fill the human heart with pride and to make charity impossible than the convic-

tion that God had chosen, say, a single people from among all the nations of the world, and had made with them a covenant of love, so that He became their God and they became His family, while the other nations of the world were left in darkness and in the shadow of death? The Hebrew prophets had to contend at every turn with the intense and bitter fanaticism of their nation, which made its boast in God and despised all other men; and, on the other hand, no doctrine was more likely to destroy hope in the breasts of those who were outside its range than the belief that for them God took no care, and had no love. It mattered not how such outcasts prayed, nor what they did, they could never enter in by the door into the Father's house, and never could receive anything but unconsidered fragments of the Divine Goodness —thrown to them in the outer place as broken meat is cast unto the dogs. Was it not the case in our Lord's day that this sense of rejection and reprobation weighed heavily upon the minds of social pariahs and confirmed them in their sin and in their despair? It seemed, indeed, as if God were only a larger Pharisee sitting alone

with fellow-Pharisees while they wandered on the highways uncared for and forsaken, and laid themselves down under the hedges to die unpitied and unregarded.

Before, however, any person refuses to consider this doctrine on the ground that it contradicts the necessary equality of all men before God he ought to ask whether there is any such equality to be found, and whether there is not rather a very manifest inequality. It is always easy to sit in one's arm-chair and to condemn this doctrine because it enshrines partiality, but it would be well to go out into life and discover the evidence of impartiality. As a matter of fact the circumstances of life are no less perplexing than the idea of election, and this doctrine, like many another which is supposed to be unjust, may turn out to be in close contact with human life. It is unreasonable to blame theologians for insisting that God made distinctions, and to accuse them of a perverse imagination, when one has only to look outside to see that this very imagination is in action over the whole world. If it be indeed an axiom embedded in the best instincts of human nature that God

makes no difference between one of His children and another, then this axiom is never argued in practical life, for the whole doctrine of election in its most pronounced form is an acting principle of history.

Is it not the case that one nation stood out from amongst all others as the chosen of the Almighty, and was endowed with singular privileges which other nations would have desired, and of which this nation was by no means worthy? With their ancient calling, their remarkable revelations, their unique order of prophets, their historical deliverances, their absolute isolation, their overflowing energy, their indomitable faith, the Jews have been, and remain unto this day, the unanswerable evidence of Divine election. What is true of Israel is equally true of England, which has been girt about by the sea and has received a clear knowledge of the Evangel, and has been distinctly succoured in straits of the national history, and has been endued with power unto the ends of the earth, and has received the gift of government of an undeniable kind, and all this, as any one can see, for great and righteous ends.

Compare the light of the Jews with the gross darkness of the Gentiles, the civilisation of England with the barbarism of an African people. Take the west end of a city, with its brightness, its culture, its luxury, and its pleasure; take the east end, crowded, squalid, hard-driven, agonised, and who is prepared to hold the scales of this contrast and to estimate its moral meaning? And between two brothers of the same family what an inequality of ability, temper, appearance, physique! This variety of lot so extreme, so irresistible, so unmerited, is either the result of blind, inexorable law, or it is the effect of living, conscious will. We are either caught in the coils of material and social forces from which we cannot escape and which are practically omnipotent, or we are the subjects of intelligent and personal government; and behind all laws, and, if you please, behind clouds of darkness, God Himself is reigning.

And if Life, being summoned as a witness for the prosecution, unexpectedly affords evidence in the defence of sovereignty, neither is this archaic doctrine so utterly contradicted by the conclusions of modern theology. Without doubt one

of the finest achievements in the range of dogma has been the rediscovery of the Divine Fatherhood, and no doubt this most living faith has been often used to impugn Divine sovereignty. It has seemed, indeed, to many minds a truism that if we believe in the Fatherhood of God, we must cease to believe in His sovereignty; and yet ought it not to be evidence, to a thoughtful person, that if one is discussing authority, that of a judge is nothing compared with that of a father. The judge is only able to try certain cases which are placed before him, and beyond the evidence of the case he cannot go. His power over the person at the bar is limited to the person's acts, and to those few acts that have been brought under his survey. Within the family the father takes to do not only with action but also with motives. He regulates at his pleasure the affairs of his household, and assigns to each his lot, with whom none may dispute, against whom none may rebel. He is not bound to give any reasons, nor does he refer to any statutes; indeed, for practical purposes, he acts as if he were omniscient and almighty. No sovereign of earth has power so

absolute, none is so unfettered in his government, as a father. The Fatherhood of God does not contradict His sovereignty, but it in reality rehabilitates and regenerates the idea, giving to it an even wider range, and investing it with a more tender character.

No doctrine which has at any time gripped the reason and inflamed the heart of any considerable body of Christian people can slip from the religious consciousness and be neglected in the teaching of truth without serious loss. Such doctrines do not die, they only sleep, and the resuscitation of this sublime conception would be very seasonable in our own time. It is not wonderful that the Roman Church has always regarded it with suspicion and has recognised in it a dangerous intellectual foe, for no idea has ever been such a certain safeguard against the priestly theory of salvation which would practically limit the covenanted mercy of God to a particular Church, and conveyance of grace to certain sacraments. If any one believes that the favour of God has rested in intention upon a man, not only before there was any church, but before he himself came into being, then it surely

follows that that favour will not be frustrated and that man miss salvation because he does not happen to belong to a particular branch of Christ's Church, or because he has not been able to avail himself of the sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord. No accident of geography or of training will be allowed to bring to nought the sovereign grace of God, but that grace will rest upon the man unto salvation even although he never had the ministrations of an ordained priest and never had the benefit of a single sacrament. Nor is there any doctrine so likely to guard good but foolish men from religious extravagances and irreverent sensationalism as the profound conviction that they stand ever before His awful majesty, Who doeth as it seemeth good to Him in heaven above and on the earth beneath. Surely it would not be possible for preachers to present the message of the Divine Love in such unworthy and offensive shapes if they had realised the austere grandeur of the doctrine of election.

If, however, this doctrine is once more to assert itself and to lay claim to something of its former dominion, it must appear in a new dress and be

relieved of certain unfortunate additions. Men's minds must not again be driven to the verge of unreason by that futile and exasperating controversy about the relation of the will of God and the will of men. The logic of theology is strong, and, joining hands with material science, it may be able to prove that we have no freedom in life, but are quite helpless before irresistible forces—the mere plaything of necessity. But consciousness has surely some value; and if we are sure of anything, it is that we can choose—can harden our hearts against the Divine Love or can open the same hearts to the Elect One of God as He knocketh in His Grace and in His Beauty. It is time also to declare without any hesitation that God does not will that any one should die, which is stark blasphemy; and that He does not withhold from any one the means of life, which were simply treachery; but that He on His part willeth all to live, and that He has done all in His power to accomplish this most worthy end. If any one be saved, as an ancient Father has it, unto God shall be all the praise: if any one perishes, on him alone shall be all the blame. He that liveth shall owe his

life to the Grace of God, and he that dieth shall die in spite of the love of God the Father, and the virtue of the atoning sacrifice of the Son, and the patient and pleading grace of the Holy Ghost.

If it should still be urged that God has favoured one man above another, it ought to be pointed out that this action of God need not mean reprobation, but may only mean an order of salvation. It has been too lightly taken for granted that where God specially blessed a man in former days He had done so to the detriment of all others, and that the end of the Divine blessing was exhausted in the man himself. Is it not far more credible, and was not this the teaching of the Hebrew prophets, that when God gave a man special privileges it was not that other men might suffer loss and he be tempted to boast, but rather that on him should be laid a deeper responsibility, and that through him other men might be saved. There are two ways of conveying the blessings of civilisation to a strange country, and it is for the rulers to judge which will best serve their purposes. All the privileges of citizenship may be conferred upon the inhabitants of that

country at once and without reserve, in which case it is to be feared that those privileges would be wasted, and might in the end turn into a curse; or certain of its inhabitants, of quick intelligence and susceptible disposition, might be selected and carefully trained that, after their education was completed and they had understood the principles of social order, they might be missionaries and teachers to their own country. After the same fashion the Eternal might have sent the Gospel of His grace on equal terms to all nations of the world at an early date of history, but surely in that case the Gospel had not been understood and would have been trampled under foot. His plan was rather to select a single nation with a genius for religion and through the centuries to train them in the knowledge of His character and in the consciousness of His goodwill, so that at an appointed time that nation might give to a whole world the good news of salvation. Had the Eternal chosen the Jews in order to condemn the Gentiles, then He had been a despot. When He chose the Jews in order to save the Gentiles, He was a Sovereign.

Divine sovereignty is not a freak of despotism, but a principle of administration, which is a selection without reprobation, so that Abraham is chosen not that a world may be cast out, but that a world may be blessed in him. With a perverted sense of Divine sovereignty the Jewish people were apt to insist that they were the favoured of God without regard to moral character or public service, and so they became insolent, but again and again their prophets declared that because they had been chosen they were on that account bound unto holiness; that if they departed from the Law of God, they of all nations would be most heavily punished; and also that if they had received immense benefits, they were holding the same in trust for the world. Whosoever, therefore, has any advantage in this world, either because he knows more or because he possesses more, is so far elect. He is therefore called upon first of all to bless God with fear and trembling, since the responsibility of his trust is so enormous, and next to serve his fellow-men with all faithfulness and with all his might.

Belief in Divine sovereignty bears several fruits

which are not over-abundant in our day; for one thing, it creates a majestic view of God, and this lies at the root of becoming and reverent religion. The unconscious irreverence of certain forms of religion in our day and the flabbiness of religious faith spring from inadequate conceptions of the power and righteousness of God. When one believes with the marrow of his bones that at the heart of the universe God reigns Almighty, All-Righteous, All-Wise, and All-Loving, then he has a worthy object of faith and a strong ground for prayer and a good hope of salvation. He is able to possess his soul in patience because he knows that above the fret and turmoil of this present life God is doing His Will and accomplishing His purposes; and in His own straits and dangers he has in God a refuge and a hiding-place. The greatest reinforcements which religion could have in our time would be a return to the ancient belief in the sovereignty of God.

This belief, as it creates a majestic God, also makes strong men. One might conclude, if he knew not the fact, but were only arguing by theory, that minds dominated by this doctrine would be weakened by superstition, or cramped

by fanaticism. It has, however, rather come to pass that the thinkers who have dared to make their way to the origin of things and to search into the mysteries of grace have been the most virile in the history of the Church. Whatever be his own opinions, no one can deny that in the annals of philosophy there has been no acuter mind than Jonathan Edwards and none more influential in theology than John Calvin. And in the conduct of life this august doctrine has been the mother, not of hypocrites and slaves, as some would have us to believe, but of saints and heroes. If it tamed a man's spiritual pride and laid him helpless at the feet of God, it cast on him the awful responsibility of holiness and it sent him forth God's freeman. There was only one thing this man feared, and that was sin; only one being before whom he trembled, and that was the Eternal. The Puritan feared God with all his soul, and this exhausted his capacity for fear. The face of man he did not fear. What was man, even though he be a king, compared with the King of kings? What mattered it what any man could do to him within whose soul God had spoken peace? Before the

battles of the Civil War in England the Cavaliers of Prince Rupert drank and sang, being gay and gallant gentlemen. Before the same battles the Puritans spent the night in prayer and reading of Holy Scripture, being, as it was then considered, fools and fanatics. Pity the Cavaliers in their brave array when the Ironsides charged next morning with their battle-cry, 'The Sword of the Lord and Gideon.' This iron and invincible faith has hated iniquity, broken tyranny, wrought righteousness, and achieved liberty. Witness its rolls of names, each one associated with the vindication of national freedom—John Knox, Oliver Cromwell, the founders of the Dutch Republic, and the fathers of New England. Hear the testimony of a man not prejudiced in favour of Calvinism, or indeed of faith: 'The Calvinists attracted to their ranks almost every man in Western Europe that hated a lie. They were crushed down, but they rose again. They had many faults; let him that is without sin cast a stone at them. They abhorred, as no body of men ever abhorred, all conscious mendacity, all impurity, all moral wrong of every kind, so far as they could recognise it. Whatever exists at

this moment in England and Scotland of conscientiousness and fear of doing evil is the remnant of the convictions which were branded by the Calvinists into the people's heart.'

And this faith has created a very tender religion in the case of its best children, whether Hebrew Prophets or Puritan saints. They who suppose that pious Calvinists have as a class been proud and hard, know not the men nor their writings. They have not read Archbishop Leighton or Samuel Rutherford, John Bunyan or Richard Baxter. If any man is saved by his own hand—his goodness, his works, or his faith—then is he lifted up to heaven, and none can bear him; but if one honestly believes that from first to last he owes all to the Grace of God in Jesus Christ, he is filled with humility. His is an awful conception of salvation, but the awfulness is shot through with a love which passeth knowledge. His election was not an act of arbitrary will, it was an act of personal grace. Before the world stood he was in the heart of God, and in the covenant of redemption; God gave him into the charge of His Son. For him and such as him was this world created and the history of man-

kind arranged. Unto him do all the promises of the Word travel, for him were all the invitations of the Evangel written. Providence united with grace that one day, as he went his own way, wilful and heedless, he might be arrested by a great light and see the Lord. For him the Lord was born and was rejected and suffered and died and rose again. When the great High Priest offered his mediatorial prayer, this man's name was mentioned as it is now daily repeated before the Throne. When the nails were driven through the Saviour's hands, they pierced his name; and when the spear touched the Saviour's heart, his name, being there first, was the cause thereof, and at this thought his heart also is broken to flow out for ever in love and holiness, in devotion and sacrifice, at the feet of Christ, in Whom the election of God stands, and by Whom it must be for ever judged.

SAVING FAITH

VII

SAVING FAITH

WERE any intelligent person asked to name the imperative condition on which a soul must be saved according to the Christian religion, he could not do anything else with the Bible in his hand than mention faith. From beginning to end of the Evangel of God, from the call of Abraham in Genesis to the last invitation of the Spirit in Revelation, the Divine voice is clear and consistent. Our manifest duty is to believe, and the refusal to believe is destruction. There are various types of saintliness in Holy Scripture, and the Judges are very different men from the Apostles, but every type is founded on faith. Amazing achievements were wrought by the heroes of Hebrew history, and the devotion of the first Christians arrested the world: the power was always faith, which was the nurse both of sacrifice and of charity. Exceeding precious

promises are made in the name of God; they are all contingent on faith. Heavenly revelations are made to simple men who were prepared to receive them through faith. The patriarchs unite in giving one sublime example of faith, the psalmists sing the praises of faith, the prophets reproach Israel with the want of faith, the apostles go everywhere preaching faith. Jesus Himself made one demand of the world, that the world should believe in Him; when the world did not believe, He was helpless and could do nothing; when any one showed conspicuous faith, Jesus could not conceal His admiration; there was nothing which He could deny to faith, and nothing which faith, He said, could not do. According to Him, he that believeth is saved, and he that believeth not is not saved, and throughout the history of the Early Church the distinction is sharply drawn between believers and unbelievers. The believers are the disciples of Jesus, and the heirs of salvation. By faith a man enters the kingdom of God, and by faith he continues therein, and by faith he shall come into its fulness when the kingdom of grace becomes the kingdom of glory.

It is surely, therefore, most desirable that one should understand what is the nature of faith, and the exact meaning of this demand which our Master made. Faith in the usage of common speech has two senses, and the confusion of these two senses has been a disaster, for it has not only darkened the religious mind, but has also gravely weakened the religious life. When one says that he believes that Jesus died and rose again, he is declaring his faith in a fact of history as he might have declared his faith in the battle of Waterloo. When one says that he believes in the doctrine of the Trinity, he is declaring his faith in a proposition of theological science as he might have declared his faith in the solution of one of Euclid's problems. This faith is purely intellectual; it deals with facts either in the domain of history or of reason. Between this faith and the life of the person there is no necessary contact, for the person may go about his daily work unmoved by the conclusion. But one may say, 'I believe in Jesus Christ,' and when he says that, he has passed into another sphere of thought and of feeling. It is as if he had said that he believed in his mother, but with a still

deeper and more sacred meaning. He is dealing now, not with facts or with doctrines, but with a person, and there is an immense difference between believing in a fact and believing in a person. When one believes in a person, he does not only believe with his intellect — which he certainly does, and therefore the facts of Christ's life are included within faith—but he believes also with his heart, with his conscience, and with his will, with his whole mental and spiritual personality. The act of faith which Jesus demands is therefore an act of personal faith, faith between a person and a person, and it implies the surrender of the one who believes to the other. Intellectual faith may be called belief, but this faith must be called trust.

It goes, of course, without saying that where any person puts his trust in another that other stands to him in a certain relation — mother, friend, partner — and certainly no one can be invited to trust in Christ without regard to His person and His character. When Christ appealed for faith, He appealed to men in a certain condition—who were sinners and who needed salvation; and He appealed as one who had a certain

office and who had undertaken a certain duty—who was a Saviour, and who had been appointed of God to complete the great work of human salvation. The trust, therefore, which one puts in Jesus, according to the Gospel, is the trust of a sinner, and Jesus who receives that trust, according to the Gospel, receives it as a Saviour. The believer in this act commits himself soul and body, without reserve and with entire loyalty, into the hands of Jesus, Who, on His part, undertakes to save him soul and body, without limit of time or circumstance. And the bond which unites together the sinner seeking salvation and the Saviour affording salvation is faith.

Before any man is entitled to place this absolute confidence in Jesus Christ, he must have good reasons for believing that Christ as a Saviour is worthy of this trust, and that he on his part is at full liberty to trust in Christ. After one understands the nature of Christian faith, he must master the grounds upon which it rests. What is the foundation and the warrant of faith by which it is justified and upon which it stands invulnerable? Three answers have been given to this question, and each of them is

true; indeed, they form together one complete ground of faith. Of course the first ground of faith must always be the testimony of Holy Scripture, for no one can believe unless he has heard. Faith cometh by hearing, and what one hears is the Gospel of God. Holy Scripture teaches us the greatness and the hopelessness of our sin, the tender mercy and loving compassion of God, His purpose of salvation, and the gift of Jesus Christ. Holy Scripture also declares unto us the arrival of the Son of God within our race by the Incarnation, His Life of Perfect Obedience and Law-keeping, His Passion and His Death. Holy Scripture also explains to us that in His Life and Death Jesus was a representative of the human race, and that by His Resurrection and Ascension and endless Intercession He has become our Saviour, and Holy Scripture lays down with the utmost clearness, and with overflowing grace, the excellence of Jesus as the Friend and Lord and Redeemer of the human soul. Finally, the voice of God through Holy Scripture appeals unto each man that he should make no delay and have no hesitation, but should make haste and instantly commit himself

into the hands of Christ. We are commanded and encouraged to believe throughout the length and breadth of the Bible, and therefore every man is justified in this trust, and any one refusing to trust is condemned.

Another ground of faith can be found in the voice of the Church, and by this ought to be understood the voice of believing men throughout all the ages. Very often the testimony of the Church has been limited to her authoritative teaching of doctrine, when she is really working in an intellectual sphere, and is demanding an intellectual faith. The testimony of the Church should be extended to include her witness to the salvation of the human soul, through the grace of Jesus Christ, and here she is speaking within a spiritual sphere, and is making her appeal to the heart. Her witness is of incalculable value, and comes only short of the testimony of Holy Scripture. Should any one hesitate to believe the Gospel declared by the Prophets and Apostles in the Bible, because it is too good to be true, or should any one desire some human evidence from those who have made the great experiment of faith, then the Church comes in and supplements

the contents of Holy Scripture. An innumerable company of saints of all ages and various intellectual creeds declare that they have heard the voice of God, and have gone forth like Abraham at His command, risking their whole spiritual position and an unknown future upon the Word of God and the Person of Jesus Christ. They have run this risk, and they have not been put to confusion; they have rather discovered, and are prepared to declare, that the half had not been told them of the goodly land into which they have already come, and whose fulness stretches before them into Eternity. It is as if a sinful man, penitent for his past and longing to see the salvation of God, should stand at the door of God's kingdom holding in his hand one of the great invitations of the Evangel, such as 'Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.' 'Is this to be read,' he says, in the fulness of its meaning? and is it possible that such a person as I am embraced in its intention?' Unto this wistful soul comes one witness after another from the gates of the kingdom, prophets, apostles, saints, martyrs. Each one comes now as an individual believer, and each one as he comes sets

his seal upon the invitation, declaring that he has trusted, and that God has been true. And at the sound of this Amen the fearful soul plucks up heart to believe.

There is also a third ground of faith, which is sometimes exalted beyond measure by those who quarrel with the Catholic Creed, and regarded with unjust suspicion by those who hold that Creed in its most intense form. It may be called spiritual reason, and it has its own use and validity. When one is considering the Gospel of God with all gravity, is it not natural that he should ask himself whether this Gospel be such as God would have given, and which he might have expected? whether, in fact, it is a worthy and becoming Gospel? There is a spiritual fitness in things, and as we have been created with a conscience and with a reason, they are bound to investigate, and to pass judgment upon this Gospel. Should our moral sense reject the message of God because it is not such as could have come from Him, or could have been addressed to us, then, in spite of the authority of Scripture and the witness of the saints, we are not entitled to believe. Should our moral sense

give hearty welcome to that Gospel because it has revealed the heart of God, and also has revealed ourselves, then the witness of the Bible and the witness of the faith have been confirmed within each man's judgment, and by each man's inner light. Upon these three grounds the witness of revelation, the witness of the Church, and the witness of the spiritual reason, faith builds her house and is strong. Afterwards she will obtain another ground, and lay her foundation in still greater depths and strength, because by and by the soul will come for herself to know what others have told, and hearing will pass into experience. Experience is the condition of certitude, so that he who trusted on the Word of God and the word of his fellow-men will be able to say, 'I know Whom I have believed,' and then the soul will have all joy and peace in believing.

Various difficulties in the matter of faith occur to the honest mind, and are especially harassing because they affect the grounds of faith, and one of the chief concerns the Bible. No one can ignore the power of this unique Book when he is in search of faith, and the very criticism

which beats upon the Bible is a tribute to its authority. There are minds which the Book immediately satisfies, and their faith builds upon it as upon a rock; there are minds which are puzzled and offended by the Bible. They are concerned about discrepancies in numbers and dates, they are horrified at certain deeds and speeches, they are confused about opposite views of truth in the Bible. Such people have even come to imagine that with another kind of Bible faith would have been easier, and that this Bible is a hindrance to faith. Had it been, for instance, a little historical manual, carefully checked by some scholar, or a synopsis of doctrine, or a collection of moral sentiments; had St. Stephen read up his Pentateuch before making his great speech in the presence of the Sanhedrin, and had the old Hebrew Judges acted like St. John, and had St. James sent his letter to St. Paul for adjustment before publication, then unbelief would have been unknown. One is amazed at a person thinking after this fashion, not on account of his want of honesty, but on accout of his want of imagination. Were the Bible this wooden Book some people seem to desire, with

no imperfections of human nature, no indifference to petty details, no play of individuality, then the Bible would certainly cause no difficulty to-day, for it would long ago have gone out of circulation. That book could hardly be divine which was not even human, and no one could vex himself with such criticism if he grasped the nature of the Bible. It is not a book written in heaven and dropped down from the clouds; it is the revelation of God through human experience. It is the likeness of the face of God drawn in the consciousness of saints; first a few rough strokes, then the suggestion of a face, and then the brightness of God's countenance in Jesus Christ His Son. What concerns us is not the canvas and the colouring, but the expression of the face, which is Love. The Bible is not merely history and biography, it is a message, which begins in the early books and grows clearer and fuller and kinder, till it reaches its climax in the Gospels. There is the stalk of the corn, and there is the chaff, which are the facts and the follies of human nature in Bible history; but there is also the grain in the ear, and that is the Gospel of God. It is this message of the

Eternal, separated from its environment of Hebrew history, which is the warrant of faith, and the sound of this Evangel can be heard from almost every part of the Bible.

Faith also is often perplexed by the mysteries of the Christian religion, and people are apt to feel in all sincerity that Christianity is simply an incomprehensible and esoteric faith with doctrines of fathomless depth, like the Holy Trinity, and the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Atonement for Sin, and the work of the Holy Ghost. Faith is therefore placed beyond the reach of plain folk. Who can pretend, for instance, to understand the Procession of the Holy Ghost or the union of the Divine and Human in the Person of Christ? Had Christianity not busied herself with such hopeless enigmas, some one says—had Christianity been only a rule for life, then it would have been possible for me to believe. Upon the other hand, had Christianity been a little manual of commonplace morals about paying one's debts and giving to the poor, one had thrown the Gospel of Christ into the fire because it was so trivial, and so shallow. Every religion must

go into the whole question of the soul and God, or else it does not deserve its name; and if Christianity has dared to pierce to the very origin of existence, it has given a pledge of reality. No doubt Christianity has dealt with mysteries; but it is to be remembered that it is not these mysteries which are the object of faith, but Jesus Christ Himself. It does not matter, in the first instance, whether one understands the Person of Christ, or the exact principle of His atoning sacrifice, if so be that one receives Christ Himself by faith. His faith then possesses the fulness of Christ and of His sacrifice together, and in the ages to come faith may explore the goodly land at her leisure till every mystery has yielded its secret and speculation has passed into knowledge. Faith is invited to make her first venture in the Gospel with Jesus, Whose victory over sin every one can verify, and Whose grace no one can deny. The door for Christian faith is not the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, nor is it even the doctrine of the Cross, but it is the Living Christ Himself.

Certain people also will always find a reason for unbelief in the divisions and controversies

of Christendom. The witness of the saints, they say, is not harmonious, but is broken. If Christian people everywhere, and at every time, had spoken with one voice, it would have been easy to believe; but Christendom is one huge Babel, in which an ordinary person loses his head, and despairs of certainty. Certainly no one can estimate how much the wranglings of Christians have increased the difficulty of faith or hindered the conversion of the world. At the same time, however, it ought to be remembered that the lamentable disunity of Christendom is not so deep as might appear; for if two matters of dispute—the orders of the clergy, and the sacraments of the Church—be withdrawn, Christendom speaks with one voice. It has the same doctrine of God, and of Christ, and of Grace, and of Sin. Besides, are not these very divisions an impressive proof of the intensity of our religion? because men had not contended even unto blood about doctrine had not these doctrines been the symbols for eternal truths. Faith, instead of being alienated by the divisions of Christendom, should rather see in these divisions the inestimable value of Jesus Christ, for Whose

slightest word men are prepared to suffer and die. In short, the most serious difficulties that stand in the way of evangelical faith would be removed and cease to exist if we only remembered that we are invited to place our faith, not in the Bible, not in the creeds of the Church, not in foolish Christian people, but in Jesus Christ Himself, in Whom faith can find no difficulty, in Whom faith will ever receive the fullest satisfaction.

Should it be asked why it is necessary to believe in Jesus in order to be saved, and why Christ cannot save the soul except upon this condition of faith, then the answer goes to the very root of the Christian religion, and indeed of all religion. What is sin but rebellion against God? and what is its punishment but alienation from God? Is not the sinner, when he is found, in a far country so distant from God and from holiness that between his soul and God there is no fellowship? What is salvation but restoration from this far country and restoration to the communion of God? There is only one way by which the soul can return to the Father, and that way is Christ Himself. When the soul

is united to Christ so that Christ and the soul are one in standing, in mind, in character, and in life, then the soul has come home again with Christ to the Father's House and the Father's bosom. It has the same communion with God which Christ has. This union can only be effected by faith, just as it is rendered impossible by unbelief. Faith is the bond which connects the soul with Christ, so that the soul being now in Christ Jesus, is partaker of the virtue of all that He has done, and heir to the fulness of all that He is. Through faith the soul is hidden in Christ, through faith the soul becomes a part of Christ, a member of His Body under the direction and protection of the Head, a branch in the vine receiving its sap and life from the stock. He that refuses to believe remains outside Christ; he that consents to believe is in Christ Jesus, and in idea and in prophecy is before God as Christ Jesus Himself.

The excellence of this Gospel of Faith must surely be plain to every mind; for while none could be more profound in its issues, none could be more simple in its statement. It lays aside for the moment the problems of the past and

future, and confines the hearer's attention to two persons, himself and Jesus Christ. It takes him as he finds himself—weak, ignorant, sinful, and cast down; it takes Christ as He is found in the Gospels—holy, strong, triumphant, and gracious. It asserts that all which the sinner needs is to be found in Christ, and that all which Christ is can be obtained by the sinner, and then it lays down the one reasonable and necessary condition, that the sinner shall trust in Jesus with all his heart. No gospel could be more gracious, because on this condition of faith alone the sinner will be transported from his environment of sin and the entail of his sinful heredity broken, and he will be placed in a new environment of holiness, and be made one of a new creation. And no gospel could be more hopeful because it unites the fortunes of the sinner for time and eternity with those of Jesus Christ who is the Son of God, and in Whom dwells the whole fulness of the Godhead.

GOOD WORKS

VIII

GOOD WORKS

ONE may believe that there is a unity between faith and good works, but one cannot shut his eyes to the fact that throughout Holy Scripture there is an apparent conflict. If the Psalms magnify faith in God with all the resources of their passionate poetry, the same Psalms also declare that no one can have access unto the Eternal unless he keeps the law of God with all his heart and with all his strength. The second Isaiah may represent the Messiah as the sin-bearer upon whom are laid the iniquities of us all, but Isaiah of Jerusalem beseeches his people not to put their trust in sacrifice but to wash their hands and make them clean by all godly living. In the Book of Revelation the saints wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, but at the same time none can enter through the gates into the city except

those who have kept the commandments of God. St. Paul devotes all the strength of his inspired reason to show that no man can be saved except through faith, and to hold up Abraham as a type of a believer; but St. James, his fellow-apostle and of the same period, insists that a man is not saved by faith, but by works, and uses Abraham as the exemplar of such works. And the Master Himself demands from beginning to end of his public ministry that people should believe, and seems to make everything of faith; and yet it is Jesus Who declares that he only who keeps His words has built his house upon a rock, and that in the day of the Great Judgment it is charity that will win the prize. One might take the Bible in his hand and show that salvation is through works, and he also might take the same Bible and show that salvation is through faith, and it is not therefore wonderful that people with a bias either to the practical or the mystical side of religion should entrench themselves in their favourite passages and build up their opposite theories of the religious life.

This is the most reasonable excuse which can

be offered for that exasperating and futile but ever-burning controversy which rages both in literature and in theology, as well as in the discussions of private life, between the comparative value of a correct creed and of a correct life. It can always be said with a fair amount of justice that one who observes the commandments and lives cleanly, honestly, and kindly with his fellow-men must surely have the right of it, and be accepted both by God and man. This position will receive the approval of common-sense and make a strong appeal also to the average conscience, because a righteous life is ever to be approved, and is indeed the only visible guarantee of goodness to our fellow-men. It will also be urged by other people, more inclined to the theory of things than to the domination of facts, that if one should hold the belief of the Catholic Church regarding God and Jesus Christ, he will surely be received into the Divine fellowship and be a person acceptable to God, and this position appeals to our respect for authority and to our historic sense. It comes to pass, therefore, that many go out of their way to belittle correct thinking in matters of religion

and to speak as if our reason had no function whatever in the sphere of the Divine mystery, and the same persons will insist unto weariness upon the excellence of the practical virtues and the moral type of character. Other persons, again, will have a profound suspicion of ordinary morality, and greatly dislike its enforcement upon the conscience, and they will magnify unto the heavens the spiritual value of holding the Catholic Creed and thinking along the line of past generations. Between those opposite schools and their wordy warfare the ordinary person is often perplexed and almost driven unto despair, inclined one day to trouble himself no more about the doctrines of the Christian faith, but to occupy himself entirely with the Ten Words of Moses, and another day to give himself with all his strength to the study of the Nicene Creed and to leave life to take care of itself.

This confusion would be dispelled, and we would arrive at the truth of things, if we were more careful to understand the meaning of the terms which we use as weapons. Creed and life are tossed to and fro in their shallowest sense, and we are not at the trouble of piercing to

that deeper meaning where both meet in perfect harmony. The moment that we grasp their true content, then the controversy is practically at an end, and we find that two words have been put asunder which God has joined together. Of course if one is to define creed as simply the intellectual belief of certain doctrines which have been formed in the Schools, and which are sanctioned by the authority of the Church, then it is plain that salvation upon such a condition would be a non-moral and unspiritual salvation. Were people to congratulate themselves upon being in a state of grace because they hold the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and cry anathema upon those who deny it, then their faith would be a disaster to their souls, and their religion would be of none effect. And if any person should take life at its lowest reading and count godly living to be nothing else than the punctilious and ostentatious discharge of certain obvious duties, then he would be very easily satisfied in religion and would simply be a somewhat shallow type of Pharisee. Such a creed could save no man because it has no ethical force, while it might make a man hard and bitter, contemptu-

ous and persecuting: such a life could save no man because it would have no spiritual value, while it might make a man shallow and self-righteous and egotistical and vain. This creed receives no sanction anywhere in Holy Scripture, while it is at least once dismissed with contempt —'The devils believe and tremble': this life was estimated at its proper value by Jesus Himself when He exposed the poor make-believe of the scribes and Pharisees.

The faith which is magnified in the Bible, and which is dear unto the saint, is no tepid belief, but a passionate conviction. It has really nothing to do with doctrines save in so far as they are the expression of religious experiences: it has to do from beginning to end with God revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord. It is the conviction that God is our Father, and has loved us from eternity, that Christ is the Saviour of the human soul and has laid down His life for us sinners. It is the conviction that Christ is able to deliver a man from his sins and to re-create him in the image of God. But it is, above all, the surrender of a man's whole being into the hands of Christ and a loyal purpose of obedience unto Christ's

commandments. It is not the faith which argues and speculates, it is the faith which repents and strives, which longs and loves. It is the faith which places a man under the dominion of the Spirit of God and under the sign of Christ's Cross.

Faith in this sense—the passion of a man's whole nature—instead of being a mere ghost of the study, is the strongest principle in human life. Behind every brave endeavour and behind every lasting achievement lies faith; for the men who dared these things and the men who brought them to perfection have first of all been brave believers. Abraham, when he went out from his own land and made the chief departure in human history, and also Columbus, when he left the Old World in search of the New, both went out in faith. The apostles, when they established a new kingdom amid the ruins of the decadent Roman Empire, and every reformer that has broken the shackles of slavery and led men into the land of promise, alike have walked by faith. No one in his home and no one in private life ever made a sacrifice with pain to himself, or ever rendered service with good to his neighbour, but

was inspired and moved by faith. They that have not faith, and regard only the things which are seen, are cowards and selfish. They that behold the things which are not seen are strong and self-denying, so that the great periods of history have been periods of faith, and the ignoble periods have been periods when faith was dead.

As it is faith which gives a man vision, the believer is therefore lifted above a squalid and ignoble life, and is able to endure labour and sorrow with patience and magnanimity. It was because Moses saw Him Who was invisible that he despised the material civilisation of Egypt and threw in his lot with the children of Israel, and by the same faith that he endured their gainsaying and obstinacy; by faith the prophets escaped the low and ensnaring ideals of their own time and reached forward to the glory of the Messianic kingdom. Faith strengthened the apostles of Jesus, so that they were not overcome either by the glory of Greece or by the grandeur of Rome, but were firmly persuaded that the chief kingdom on earth was righteousness, peace, and joy. Just as a man who sees

noble things, and has associated with noble people, lives himself after the same fashion—a civilised man among savages, a cultured man among Philistines—so the religious man who associates with the Master regards with indifference the tawdry glitter of this world, and bears the trials of the present life with an even mind. And so faith produces the best of all works, a pure heart and a calm life.

History affords illustrations upon the largest and most convincing scale of the omnipotence of faith. If only a strong man can believe in any cause with all his mind and with all his heart, he makes converts to the cause by the hundred thousand, and will carry that cause to victory. No danger daunts faith, no argument turns aside its onslaught. The believer is a force, he is a partaker of the Divine strength, he fights along with the angels of God. Mahomet and his early followers created a religion and conquered provinces of the human race because they believed, and more than once a handful of men have changed the fortunes of an empire because they were strong in faith. Faith is the nurse of unworldly aspiration, and of splendid

deeds which have redeemed the race from reproach and made its history to be an inspiration.

It ought, therefore, surely to be evident that if faith on the ordinary level of life is capable of splendid achievement, there can be no limit to her fruitfulness in the sphere of the Christian religion. Faith here is devotion, not to an imperfect man or to a doubtful cause, but to the Son of God, 'Immortal Love,' to Him Who is the perfect ideal of the human soul, Who is also the spring and fulness of spiritual life. When one believes with all his soul in Jesus, what sacrifices may not be accomplished! what services may he not render! what mercy will be in his soul! what charity will be visible in his life! His will be no mere deeds of ordinary morality —such poor efforts can be accomplished without faith; his will be the rich and delicate fruit of the Spirit—the lessons which can only be learned at the feet of Jesus Christ. A new principle of life in his soul will appear in acts of which, in their spirituality and in their graciousness, morality never dreams, and which have only been revealed and made possible by the life of Jesus Himself. Through the soul grafted into the

stock of Christ the very sap of the Divine Spirit will flow, and the flowers will be after the fashion of the Gospels in their heavenly colour and richness. Without the faith of Christ these works had not been possible, and the works and faith are related together as the tree and the fruit. They are good works because they are the fruit of faith, and faith has been vindicated by the works which it has produced.

It may, of course, be urged that many good works have been produced without the principle of faith, and that it is not just to condemn the works which have not sprung from faith; and certainly the advocate of faith should be very careful, in his zeal for faith, that he do no despite to morality. It ought to be freely granted that many persons who are, at least, not consciously in the communion of Jesus' spirit, and not a few who are absolute unbelievers, have led lives of elevation and nobility. These lonely and cheerless lives, whereon the sun has shined so coldly and yet which have produced pure Alpine flowers, are a rebuke unto persons who have lived in perpetual warmth, and whose souls ought to have abounded in flower and fruit. No one ought ever

to plead for faith apart from works, nor ought he at any time to belittle the fruits of morality. The strength of faith is ever to be tested by the abundance of works, and he who produces no works has no faith. If there be such a thing as dead works—works, that is to say, without beauty and without fragrance—there is such a thing as dead faith, faith without force and without love.

While, however, the possibility of certain works apart from faith must be allowed, it must also be insisted that the quality of works without faith can never be compared with the quality of the works which spring from faith. This is really not a matter of theology but of human experience, and it turns upon the character of a man's work. Work is not to be measured by time and by quantity, by its appearance and its effect; it is ever to be estimated by its spirit. It is not the drawing and the colouring which constitute the fascination of a picture; it is the mind of the artist. It is not the form and show of a deed which constitutes its excellence; it is the intention of the doer. What a man is passes into his work, and the principle of faith, which, as we were

saying, is fellowship with Jesus Christ, tinges all the works which are done by the man's Christ-nature, and lends unto them some of the beauty of the Lord's own life. Every day we have regard to the spirit of work, distinguishing between good works which live and bad works which are already dead. The present bestowed upon one by a person who does not love him, and has only given for selfish purposes, is a poor thing, which earns no gratitude and is thrown aside with dislike. The gift offered unto one by his child, who has denied himself in order to obtain it and bestows it for affection's sake, is precious beyond silver and gold, and is treasured with vigilant care. It matters nothing that the former offering was costly and shapely, or that the latter was of little value and uncomely to the eye; each is really a symbol—one for a strange and cold heart, the other for tender and humble affection. We therefore conclude in the affairs of life that there are two kinds of works, living and dead, and that the difference is the spirit which planned and performed them.

Are we, therefore, unreasonable in holding that in the religious life works also fall into two

classes, with a different value before God and even before man? Was it the same thing that a Pharisee should tithe his mint and his anise and his cummin, and that a poor widow should throw two mites into the treasury? Did not the honest heart of the people distinguish between the two? and is not God greater than our hearts and knoweth all things? Was it the same thing that Simon the Pharisee asked Jesus to a feast for custom's sake, if not for meaner reasons, and that Matthew the publican also asked Him to a feast for love's sake and in the gratitude of his soul? Is it the same thing that a man should obey the demands of the moral law for the sake of his reputation, and the opinion of his neighbour, and the comfort of his life, and the obtaining of glory, and that he should keep the same law, not in the letter but in the spirit, with an overflowing measure of obedience because it is the law of his Heavenly Father and the commandment of his Saviour? Is there anything less attractive and less effectual for high ends than cold and calculated morality? Is there anything more winsome and inspiring than self-forgetful and self-sacrificing devotion?

When Christianity makes works to be dependent upon faith and its constant outcome, our religion not only delivers its disciples from the tyranny of legal bondage, but also affords the most certain guarantee of high living. If the Christian seems to leave Moses and the Ten Words, it is to find the Ten Words deepened and spiritualised in the Sermon on the Mount, and to discover in Jesus not only a Lawgiver, but also an Exemplar. If the motive of fear be relaxed and disappear, then the Christian is not left without a salutary stimulus, for love takes the place of fear, and he obeys because he loves, till perfect love casts out fear. If for the moment he suffers no longer the scourge of an angry conscience, he is strengthened inwardly unto obedience by the Spirit of his Lord. Good works are no longer now a task and a performance—they are a devotion and a fruit. He is not a servant fulfilling his appointed tale of work, he is a child doing his father's will in his father's house. Good works in all their forms are now the expression of his gratitude, and the harvest of his believing soul.

By this doctrine of faith and good works two

persons are condemned, and the first is the man who professes to produce works, but confesses that he has no faith. Upon the whole he is apt to be high and lifted up, congratulating himself upon his strength and upon his independence, who has been able to do all these things without Jesus Christ. The measure of his moral success is in reality the reflection upon his unbelief. He has been careful to pay all the debts which he owed to trifling creditors; he ignores and refuses to pay his debts to his chief Creditor, who is God. He gives himself some trouble to show respect to his fellow-men according to the claims which they have upon him of honour or of charity; but one Man he selects for rejection and indignity, and that is the Man who laid down His life upon the cross that he might be saved. He takes credit to himself because no good cause has ever appealed in vain to him, and no high ideal has ever been unadmired by his soul, and yet it is this very man who passes by the invitation of God's kingdom, and will have none of the cross of Christ. What value in character shall we assign to the soul which admires all spiritual beauty except the beauty

of Christ, which gives welcome to all love except the perfect love of God, which is ready to do every good work except the chief work of all, and that is faith in Christ?

The other person condemned by this doctrine is he who professes to believe, and who knows that he is not doing the works. Could there be any more ghastly irony than a human being declaring his faith in God and refusing to keep His laws; calling himself by the name of Christ, and denying Christ's cross; accepting his fellow-men as his brethren in Christ, and not doing them even a stranger's service? How can he have learned to call God Father Whom he has never seen, when he does not treat his fellow-man as a brother, whom he has seen? How can his sins have been forgiven of God—sins which were as scarlet and red like crimson—when he will not forgive his neighbour the trifling transgressions of human life? How can he be partaker of the Divine grace, whose poverty-stricken soul is not bearing the scanty fruits of common morality? Can it be in the reason of things that an ungrateful, unloving, dishonest and unrighteous person is saved? And when we ask the ques-

tion, it answers itself: Without works there is no faith; and this man is walking in a vain show, and feeding his soul with wind. His exposure in some moral crisis of life, when, forsaken of the grace which he has abused, he falls into gross sin, or when, in the light of eternity, his refuges of lies and coverings of hypocrisy will be burned up, is going to be one of the most awful acts of Divine judgment.

SANCTIFICATION

IX

SANCTIFICATION

ACCORDING to the Catholic faith, the religious life has one supreme moment never to be repeated nor anulled, and afterwards it has a varied history whose chapters often repeat themselves, and sometimes annul one another. The conscious moment occurs when one who has been frivolous, unbelieving, and worldly is arrested and bethinks himself, when the mist rolls away in which he has been walking as in a dream, and he sees the austere and beautiful reality of the spiritual world — when he is moved by a sudden and irresistible influence to reverse his course and to fling himself with utter abandonment into a new and undreamt of future. The veil may be lifted by a book, or by a picture, or by a conversation, or by a silence, as it most commonly is lifted by the gospel declared in Holy Scripture or in public preaching. The effect is vision, con-

version (and regeneration). The history begins when a man who has come to himself and to God sets himself to cultivate the religious life under the guidance and the grace of the Holy Ghost. And his progress from that day in knowledge and in holiness is sanctification.

As sanctification is the recreation of the soul in a nobler shape, its first necessity is a Perfect Type, and this type is Christ Jesus. Within the recesses of our mind we have got an idea of physical beauty which the ordinary person is neither able to describe nor to draw. It is an endowment of which he is not always conscious, a piece of property which he has not yet possessed. One day he enters a gallery and stands before the Venus of Milo or the Apollo Belvidere. In that instant he is conscious of his ideal, and has recognised that perfection which all along has been in his mind. After the same fashion we have in our soul an ideal of spiritual beauty which we could not place upon paper, and to which we ourselves have never attained. Occasionally it is dimly thrown out before us in the life of a friend; we recognise nobility of which we have dreamed, incarnate in this man. No

one, however, has exhibited in his character the absolute perfection which our souls seek after, and would desire to see. Every good man in Holy Scripture or in history is a hint of the supreme Goodness, an inspiration for our imagination, a prophecy of a coming revelation. As the worthies of the Bible pass before us, each one at once attracts and disappoints us, because there is in him some trait of goodness, in him also some grave defect. Moses and David, Samuel and Jonathan, Isaiah and Jeremiah, amaze us in turn by their moral vision, their spiritual poetry, their chivalrous heroism, their strong integrity, their gracious words, their patient suffering. They also leave us dissatisfied by their human faults and glaring imperfection. They themselves look forward to a day which is to come, and imagine a Face which shall satisfy the soul. Isaiah, in his 53rd chapter, and David, in the 72nd Psalm, with eager, reverent mind, depict the Man which is to be, and bid men wait for his coming. With less than this Man they may not be content; when this Man appears, nothing will remain to be desired. Throughout the world, in sacred

literature and also in secular, scattered fragments of a perfect figure can be found, and then when Christ appeared it was discovered. According to universal opinion, from which there is no dissension, and never indeed can be, Jesus fulfils our ideal of the Perfect Man.

It were possible to imagine a human type which would be perfect but provincial; it is a part of Christ's excellence that His perfection is universal. The son of a Jewish maiden, we do not think of Him as a Jew; He is a Man representing the human race. Born in the first century, we do not speak of Him as a Man of His time, because he is a Man of all time. Living within the circumstances of a narrow life, we do not think of Him as a carpenter or as a rabbi. We think of Him as above all circumstances and doing everlasting work. We should find it impossible to describe His character, because we should have to include every single high quality, and to state them at their highest point. One hardly limits Him to manhood, because one feels that in Him was also combined the excellency of the other sex, so that man and woman meet and are harmonised

in Him. His character is not one of the colours into which light is split; He is rather Light itself, which gives its tint to every flower, to the sea, and to the sky. For all men, therefore, and all women, of every nation and of every age, and of every condition, He is the pattern of perfection.

His elevation above the limitations of His time and nation make Him an eternal type. Pictures even of the great masters have their vogue, coming into favour, and going out of favour, like a fashion. The picture indeed remains the same, but our idea of what we want and of what we admire changes. This picture only is not subject to the caprice of moral fashion, since the only change is in its growing appreciation and its deeper understanding. There have been many schools in Christianity, but all of them have adored Christ. There have been many schools of unbelief, but none of them, save the most unworthy, have dared to criticise Christ. He is new in every age, and He belongs to every age, and with every age He is more certainly accepted as the brightness of humanity.

Against Christ, however, as the type of the

soul it may be urged that He is too high and is lifted beyond our attainment. Is it not a disability in our Christian faith that it should propose unto every Christian, however imperfect, the imitation of Jesus, and insist that he shall never be content till he is like his Lord? If this be a fault, it is a fault of nobility, and not of poverty. What finer tribute could be paid to any religion than this, that it will look at nothing but the ideal of perfection, and never rest till that be realised in the life of its humblest member? It is better to fail aiming at the highest than to succeed aiming at the lowest; and in the distant perfection of Christ is the inspiration of the Christian life. For St. John and for St. Paul it was the joy of their hearts that they had never reached unto the height of Jesus, although they had ever been climbing, and that with every year to come there would open out to them unimagined summits of holiness, so that they would still be only drawing nearer to Christ, Whom no man could overtake on this side of the grave. It is the very penalty and promise of our life that with us everything approximates, but never touches, perfection. No one has ever

seen a straight line; it is but a form of speech, or a basis of calculation. All that we see, all that we feel, are but essays at absolute beauty, truth, and love. What we see is higher than what we do, what we imagine is more than we see, and yet there remaineth what has not entered into the heart of man. The glory of Christian sanctification is twofold: that we never can in this world rise to the perfection of Christ, but that we may ever be growing into His likeness from youth to old age.

If the first word in sanctification be Perfection, the second is Revelation, for this perfection must be shown unto our eyes, and it has been so made manifest in the mirror of the Gospels. For a moment one had desired a grander medium, and had been inclined to ask that the character of Jesus should have been made known to us by the mind of angels, or by the trained thinkers of the human race. The next moment one sees his mistake, and is thankful for the biographers of Jesus. What was required in this case was not exposition by supernatural intellect or by great genius, but simply honest and loyal minds which would hold up the glass to the life and person

of the Lord. It had been an unspeakable misfortune if, instead of the simple annals of the Gospels, we had had learned studies of Jesus' life. We had then seen the Master as men imagined Him, tricked out with their dainty phrases and tawdry tributes of respect. As it is we see the Master as He spoke and as He worked before men who did not understand Him and could not then appreciate Him, but who loved Him and reflected Him in their love. We may be certain as we read the Gospels that we are looking on the Face of Christ, and that we know what He was and what He is.

For this revelation the Gospels are absolutely necessary, and can never be superseded; for although the Christian may come to know Christ in his heart, he can never afford to lose Christ in the Gospels. It is there that we first see Him, and it is there that we first understand Him. We had never known the Christ of the heavenly places unless we had known the Christ of Galilee, and we only know to-day what the Christ of the heavenly places is because we know what the Christ of Galilee was. It is best that every disciple should have the likeness of the Lord hanging upon the

inner wall of his heart, but it is necessary that he should ever verify that likeness by the one which he possesses in the four Gospels. Had we not the authoritative portrait of the Gospels, as time went on strange likenesses of Christ might be created and come into fashion, and Christians be formed after a type which would be no longer the character of Jesus Christ, but the creation of a later age. There has been such a thing as an unreal and fantastic Christ, who has been preached and held up for imitation, and against this false and dangerous mysticism there is no check or remedy save the face of Christ in the mirror of the Gospels.

Among the various guides to sanctification the most reliable and effectual is the Life of Christ; because, while every other is local and represents a school, this book contains the length and breadth of Christian perfection. A Puritan is satisfied with the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and a Roman with the *Imitation of Christ*; and each may appreciate up to a certain degree the school of the other, but both find themselves at one in the Gospels. If, however, the Gospels are to have their due effect, and one is to see in their

pages the very face of Jesus, he must come without prejudice and without preconceptions—in fact, as St. Paul would say, 'with unveiled face.' There is a constant danger that one should have made up his mind as to what Jesus ought to do and what Jesus ought to say, and then readjust the whole Life of Jesus, with subtle interpretations and artificial glosses, to fit in with his own mind. An ingenuous faith will accept the Lord as He appears in the picture of the Evangelists, being prepared for any surprises of goodness, and being always convinced that Jesus' Life is Life in Excelsis. Especially is it dangerous to lay down in one's mind any principles about the miraculous, and to take it for granted, as a modern person is apt to do, that the miraculous is impossible. Nothing can be impossible with Jesus, Who has brought the power and grace of Deity within the narrow circumstances of human life. Far more wonderful than the healing of lepers and the raising of the dead is His own personal life, with its air of heaven, its unfailing resources of grace, its irresistible influence upon human character. One reason for limited and provincial Christianity, a

Christianity with narrow vision and one-sided character, is that Christians have gone to learn holiness everywhere except in the Gospels. The condition of a rich and full Christianity will be the study of the Divine and perfect life revealed to us by the Evangelists, and allowed to have its unfettered play upon our own souls and lives.

The third principle in the doctrine of sanctification is Contemplation, and it would be wise for Christians to remind themselves constantly that there are two methods by which any person can become like another, just as there are two methods by which an artist can be the disciple of a great master. We may set ourselves with care and perseverance to reproduce our friend's manner, to echo his tone of voice, and to repeat his actions in detail. We can attain such skill in this study that strangers will be irresistibly reminded of our hero by our pronunciation of a word, or by a sudden gesture, or by the repetition of an idea. This is imitation, a method which is sanctioned in Art as often as a pupil copies from a picture, sanctioned also in literature as often as a student masters a great writer's style, and sanctioned in life with frequent good results

as often as a young person follows exactly in the steps of a good man.

There is, however, another method, which is more spontaneous and more effectual, wherein one simply lives as much as he can in his friend's company, and leaves his mind open to his influence, and braces himself to seek after the same ends. Gradually, and without conscious effort, the poorer nature changes into the likeness of the higher, so that every person can recognise that a change has taken place, and that it has been a regeneration; but the change is recognised, not by sound of voice or trick of manner, but by the spirit of the life and the new shape of the soul. The subject of this change will have no self-consciousness, and will not know that his face is shining; he will rather be more painfully convinced than ever of his unlikeness to the friend whom he reveres, while all the world has seen him approximating to that likeness every day. This method is contemplation, which is not to imitate but to behold Christ.

Contemplation has two advantages over imitation, and the first is inwardness, for he that contemplates knows Christ better than he who

imitates. One person may set himself to study a picture, reading what he can find about the age and school, about the drawing and colour of the work, till he could give its description and its history. Another may sit alone with that picture, without a book and without a note, for the same space of time, and allow the picture to imprint itself upon his soul. The former could write the story of the picture, the latter possesses the picture in the spirit. The saint is not simply a man who could relate the biography of Christ from end to end, and at every turn could discover a rule for his daily actions, till the Life of the Lord had passed into dates and regulations. He is rather a man who has been overcome by the excellent beauty of the Lord's face, and has spent his time in admiration, so that afterwards the reflection of that beauty still lingers on his own character and life. Contemplation also has this advantage, that it never suggests the bondage of conscious Art, but always allows the perfect freedom of the soul. There is a vast distinction between one who copies a master and one who belongs to the school of the master. The copy of a picture is exact in

details, and may often be rendered with great skill; but it remains, even in the case of the most pious copyist, a representation of alien work. The disciple does not copy any of the master's work, but he paints in the master's spirit. His subject may be different from any which the master has chosen, but his treatment of the subject will be after the master's mind, so that you do not say, This is what the master first did, but This is how that master would have done. He has retained his own individuality, and has done more homage to the master.

It seems an excellent rule to say what Jesus says, and do what Jesus did; but this is really a mechanical idea of sanctification, and would keep the disciple of Jesus in bondage all his days. Between the details of Jesus' life and of our own there is the difference between the east and the west, the difference between the first century and the nineteenth, the difference between two civilisations. One dares to say that there are words of Jesus which, as they stand, we could not use, and works of Jesus which we ought not to do. It is not for us to reproduce the form of Galilean life, nor even to draw too close

an analogy between its circumstances and our environment. It is ours to catch the spirit of the Lord and to enter into His mind, so that the love and righteousness which inspire every word and deed of Christ may pass as a subtle essence into the body of our daily life. And so it will come to pass that in our modern life Jesus Himself will live afresh, and we shall bring Him nearer to a faithless world.

Another principle of sanctification is Progression, which means that we cannot grow into the likeness of the Lord in a brief space, but that we must advance from stage to stage. It is unfortunate for plain people who do not care for argument or nice distinctions that there has been so much trouble made over the idea of Christian perfection. It is exasperating, on the one hand, that a believer in Jesus Christ should almost resent the suggestion that he can overcome his sins and trample them under foot; and it becomes an irony when, on occasion, he will refuse to sing the words at the end of the Te Deum, that God would keep us this day from sin, upon the ground that this is impossible, and is foolhardy to ask. Does it prove inevitable

shallowness of character and a vain mind to believe that we can rid ourselves of sin in the fellowship of Jesus Christ? and is it an example of humility, and even of reverence for the Lord, that we should groan all our days under this body of death? Can no Christian say with truth, 'Thanks be unto God Who has given me the victory'? and if he says so, is he of necessity a weakling or a boaster? It is also only less trying to be told that certain people have come to perfection and are no longer conscious of sin; and the irony is still keener in this case when they alone have perceived their own perfection, and any one of their neighbours could point out their sins. Can the re-creation of the soul be so rapid and slight an achievement? Can the height of Christian character be so easily and surely climbed? This perfection must be on a very narrow and poverty-stricken scale—the scale not of an oak which groweth slowly to its majestic proportions, but of a gourd which cometh up in a night. What occurs to the plain person who has no theory, but is only possessed with an overwhelming idea of the excellence of Christ, is that sanctification will advance on a

series of levels, one rising above the other. Each level, as we look at it from below and toil to reach it, will seem perfection, because it is the complete face of Christ as we have seen it from our standpoint. When we have completed a fresh ascent, our vision will have grown; we shall then discover fresh imperfection in ourselves and unsuspected beauty in Christ. Again we shall be inspired with adoration, again we shall be smitten with dissatisfaction—adoration of the new glory, dissatisfaction with our own defects. We shall brace ourselves for another ascent, which is to be the last; and again we shall be disappointed with that disappointment wherein are mixed both joy and sorrow. It has been said that the final ascent will be the hour of death, and that then the soul will pass altogether into the likeness of the Lord; but on this point Catholic doctrine has not agreed, and the Christian reason must have her own difficulty. One believes that deliverance from the body and the open vision of the Lord will strike dead within us the remains of sin, both the desire and the habit. One hopes also that the first day of the heavenly life will only be the beginning

of another progress which shall know no end, wherein with every age we shall again ascend, following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, while He ever moves before us in new revelations of holiness.

The last great word in this doctrine is Inspiration, without which indeed there could be no hope of sanctification. Between formal and real holiness the difference really is that the one is of the Spirit of God, and the other is of the will of man. It is possible by sheer force of will to abandon certain sins and to copy certain virtues; by sheer force of will to walk at a distance in the steps of Christ, and to approximate to the outer form of His life. This is a laborious effort without beauty and without fruit—a carved tree, not a living plant. Growing and fruitful holiness is the outcome of Jesus' spirit living and working within the soul. It matters not how much the student may love the master's work, or how patiently he may reproduce it on the canvas, there will ever be something which cannot be designed, present in the original picture and absent in the reproduction. Were the master to stand beside the pupil and ply him with rules,

were he even to take his hand and guide it in the stroke, it would not avail. One thing only would serve, that the very spirit of the master should pass into his pupil, till he saw with his master's eye and wrought with his master's hand, till he was lost and absorbed in his master. While Jesus was with His disciples they were pupils in His school, and we envy them their privilege. He pointed out their faults, and showed them what they ought to have done, and yet they failed, and came short in almost every point of the religious life. By and by He passed from sight, and then He returned as a spiritual influence to speak not in their ears but in their souls, to guide not their lives but their minds. They were not now simply instructed—they were also inspired, and inspiration is as much beyond instruction as the soul is more than the body. It has frequently happened that a husband and wife have lived together for a quarter of a century, and the husband has been filled with devotion and admiration; but it was after his wife departed, and was now a spiritual presence in his heart, that he began to think and to live so exactly

after her model that the world noticed the change, and were reminded at every turn of her who, unseen, was still living. The vision of perfection would not avail the Christian soul without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by which that vision is indeed afforded, and by which it is turned into reality. For the soul is like the sensitive film, and the Lord in the Gospels is the perfect beauty; but the medium of reproduction, without which all would be vain, is the light of the sun, and the light of the sun is the Holy Spirit of the Lord.

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

X

THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

THIS doctrine has been described by the greatest of Puritan theologians as the 'very salt of the covenant of grace,' and it is clothed in words of majestic sound, but it has had two readings, one of which is neither worthy nor reasonable. People have been apt to imagine that by this perseverance is simply intended that however a man may live, and whatever he may do, if only he has been the object of the Divine love and has accepted the offer of the Divine mercy, he will be kept from destruction in this present life and afterwards will receive the heavenly kingdom. Certain in ages past, and some possibly at this present, have persuaded themselves that they are free from the obligations of the moral law, and that they are at liberty to sin without punishment, because, as they believe, their names are written in the Book of Life

and they are the favourites of the Eternal. Under no circumstances can they be cast out or finally be lost, since the doors of hell are for ever barred against them and the doors of heaven are ever opened for their entrance. No deed of theirs, they would argue, can reverse the decrees of God or baffle His purposes, and the very grace of God may become to them the minister and safeguard of sin. Were this the doctrine of perseverance, it would be difficult to imagine one more absolutely unreasonable, since it would make the choice of God an arbitrary caprice wherein God has elected a person for no reason, and would not afterwards change His choice even for the strongest reason. Nor could one imagine a doctrine more thoroughly immoral, because it not only tolerates wickedness, but bestows upon it the absolute favour of the Almighty, so that a man has been selected to fulfil the lusts of the flesh and to escape their punishment. Had this been the doctrine of perseverance, then it would have been a singular curse to all men who believed it, and long ago would have been cast out of the Christian faith with loathing and contumely.

This doctrine can be best understood in the light of its own terms, since the perseverance which is mentioned therein is the perseverance of the saints, and is never to be understood to be the perseverance of sinners. Among various desires which visit the human heart from time to time surely one of the worthiest is the passion for holiness. There come to us moments when we are ashamed of our sins, and desire to cast them off; other moments when we wrestle with sin and with principalities and powers of the evil world; moments when we are beaten and gravely discouraged in the spiritual conflict; other moments when we overcome and our hearts are filled with pure gladness. Again and again this question comes to one's mind as the day of life goes on and draws to its close, Am I to be beaten or victorious? and in the end shall I attain unto the heights of perfection in Christ Jesus after which I have striven, or shall I come short to the breaking of my heart? It is a question which deserves an answer, and it is answered in this doctrine. Some aims of life may not be attained: if a man will hunger for riches or for glory, he may be miserably dis-

appointed. Some aims are bound to be attained; and if a man will make it the chief purpose and effort of his life to achieve holiness, he shall not be put to confusion either in this world or in that which is to come. What he has loved and striven after, what he has thought of in the quiet of the night, and in the midst of the day's business, as beyond all gain of this world shall be granted unto him, and granted beyond all that he ever could have imagined. Whosoever fails the saint shall succeed, and whosoever misses his inheritance it shall not be the saint in light. This is the perseverance of the saint: it is the triumph of spiritual character.

The strong grounds on which this doctrine rests are various in their character, but they conspire together in their effect, and the first is the purpose of the Eternal. No one can study the physical world with any intelligence and not observe that from the beginning in the lowest and most helpless forms of life up to the consummation of physical creation in man, there has been a sustained progress towards perfection. As often as we see absolute imperfection in nature we conclude either that there has been

some catastrophe or that there has been some arrestment. We expect to see at every stage a temporary and modified perfection, and that we accept as the prophecy of a final and complete perfection. Perfection first in progress and then in completion is a law of the physical universe. When we pass into the spiritual universe, we are surely right in judging that the same law will hold good according to its new circumstances and with its new subjects. The soul may be at first only a rude form of spiritual life, but as time comes and goes and the agencies of the spiritual world play upon it, the obedient and receptive soul will surely advance from stage to stage until it stands complete according to the type of its kind. If it is the case that the energy of God in the outer world working through long periods of time has never flagged and has not failed of its intention, then is there any one who can believe that the same energy directed to yet higher ends and trusted in by far higher creatures, will fail and grow weary before their desire and the mind of God have been fulfilled. Whom He called, them He justified ; whom He

justified, them he also glorified, is the certain and irresistible evolution of grace.

Another ground for this doctrine is the life of our Master, since it is ever to be remembered that according to the theory of Christianity a man's future hinges not upon his own attainments but upon the achievement of His Lord. No one has reached the Christian standpoint—the standpoint, that is to say, of St. Paul and St. John—who can regard the agony and victory of our Lord as isolated and personal. When He came, it was not for Himself but for His Church; and when He resisted the enemy and trampled him under foot, it was for His Church; and when He died upon the cross, it was still for His Church; and when He rose from the dead, He rose again for the Church; and when He ascended into the heavenly places, the Church ascended also; and now when He offers His ceaseless intercession, it is as the High Priest of the people for whom He has entered within the veil and whom He represents. The lot of the Church and the lot of Jesus Christ are inextricably and eternally bound up together, and what holds good of the Church as a whole is

true also of each one of her members. The Christian idea is that the disciples and the Lord are so entirely one, that in the history of the disciples the history of the Lord is repeated. In St. Paul or St. John or the most obscure and weakest of all the saints Christ is tempted of the Evil One and overcomes: Christ endures the trials of this present life and is not cast down, Christ obeys the will of God and finishes the work God gave Him to do: Christ is crucified unto sin and lives unto righteousness. He endured great travail and has won His recompense, which is to reap the fruit of His triumph in innumerable human lives which He guards and sanctifies, which He will present blameless unto the Father. When the disciple desires to strengthen his heart in the conflict of the soul, it is not wise for him to look overmuch within, and to take account of his inherent weakness, nor is it wise for him to look overmuch without upon the massed forces of evil and to allow his imagination to be darkened. His faith may look without, but it at the same time ought to look upward, nor rest till it has established itself in the very midst of the throne and upon the Lamb Who

once was slain. The hope of the Christian's ultimate victory and sure perfection is drawn from the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus Christ, His session upon the throne and His unceasing mediation. Were the poorest and feeblest disciple who had ever trusted and loved his Lord to be left a prey unto sin and be caught finally in the bondage of the Evil One, then the fruit of Christ's victory on Calvary had been taken from His hands, and the crown of gold had been replaced again by the crown of thorns. 'None shall pluck you out of My hand,' said the Lord and Good Shepherd to His dismayed and helpless flock; and since He said that word His hand has been pierced and has received the sceptre of the Cross, whereby He has obtained all power in heaven above, and on the earth beneath, and in the dark places which are underneath the earth. Should one of His disciples miss the everlasting city, and be left in the outer darkness, then has this strong promise of the Lord been a thing of nought—a word which Satan had torn in pieces and flung in His face —and the power conferred upon Him in virtue of His Sacrifice had been only an empty show,

a power which could be flouted and brought into contempt. Christ Himself declared plainly that for weal or woe He and they who trusted in Him would stand together, so that they could not be in the darkness and He in the light, nor He upon the throne and they in the prison when the end of all things has come, and every man is judged according to the law of God. 'Where I am,' He declared, 'there ye shall be also, and because I live ye shall also live.' Wherefore if you look closely into this matter, the perseverance of the saints is another word for the perseverance of Jesus Christ.

The hope of perseverance also builds her home in the love of God, because faith remembers that God is not only our Creator and our Governor, but that He also is our Father. Between a master and a father there is one great difference, which affords strong consolation to the believer. A master may be kind and considerate, but it is not expected of him that he should endure stupidity and incapacity beyond a point, and no master would be justified in condoning moral faults and shifty character. But a father, he must bear with the children who call him by this

name, and who by the very word compel his patience. It is not possible for him to chide them as the world does, or to cast them out from his home as an unprofitable servant is discharged by his master. They are his whom he has brought into the world, and who bear his likeness, to whom his heart is knit, and whom he is bound to succour. With what thoughtfulness and foresight, with what gentleness and consideration, does a father deal with the failings of his children, encouraging them in every good endeavour, tenderly complaining of their wilful faults, covering over their inevitable infirmities and looking forward with expectation to a day of more perfect manhood. And God is the Father of our souls, in Whom there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, in Whom all the wisdom and patience of a frail earthly parent are raised to their supreme height and are glorified. Is not the whole system of providence a series of selected and regulated means by which the souls of God's children may be carved and shaped after the likeness of Christ? God's chastisements are represented in Holy Scripture as the evidence of His love

and the instrument of holiness, and even His hot anger is the fire whereby the dross is cleansed away from human lives. He cannot be angry for ever with His children because He is a Father, and, according to the prophet Hosea —a prophet whose heart was made tender unto the breaking by the sorrows of his own home— the heart of the Eternal repents even of His just judgments, so that it cries aloud as in an agony of affection. God remembered when Israel was a child and He called His son out of Egypt, when He taught Ephraim to walk, holding His children by their arms as a mother her little one. Very greatly had Israel sinned, and very far short had Israel come of the glory of God; but Israel was not a stranger nor a servant; Israel could not be dismissed for righteousness' sake; Israel could not be forgotten for love's sake: 'How shall I give thee up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . Mine heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.' The wisdom and the love of God are pledged unto the believer, and the perseverance of the saints is bound up with the Fatherhood of God.

According to the Bible, the saints have also greatly strengthened their hearts in the hope of victory, because they are firmly persuaded that their souls and God are bound together in a covenant which cannot be broken. This conviction is one of the secret things of the religious life which cannot be judged by reason and cannot be proved unto the outer world. As a man and woman may be knit together in ties of affection which are not known unto their neighbours, nor, indeed, can be declared, but which are the strongest bond on earth, so is it with the believer and God. The Eternal has spoken to him with a clear and unmistakable voice, and he has obeyed the call of God. What God asked of him was trust, and trust he has given. What God promised to him was His goodwill, and this goodwill God will surely give. While strangers seek to find God in the designs of creation and in the march of history, this man knows God within his own soul, and there holds communion with Him. There have been many passages between him and God wherein God has complained of him and he has complained to God, wherein God has rebuked him and he has

repented at the feet of God, wherein God has comforted him and he has said, 'My God!' As the years passed this friendship has become as the marriage bond, and the saint no more expects that it could be broken than a wife could believe that her husband would cast her off. Through the Old Testament the prophets returned again and again to the hope of the covenant, and declared that the mountains might depart and the hills be removed, but the covenant of peace between God and His people would never be broken. In the New Testament Jesus takes up the same beautiful conception in the upper room when He declares that the Sacrament of His Body and Blood is the sign and substance of this covenant. Before it had been stated in faithfulness, and the Word of God is exceeding strong: it is now sealed with blood, and believers have two things wherein to trust —the Word of God and the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As often, therefore, as the believer takes the Sacrament he pledges himself as in an oath to trust, to love, and to obey, and since there be two in a covenant, and the other be God, He in His turn pledges Himself to endure, to deliver,

and to sanctify. Should, therefore, any believer be in the end put to confusion and fail to obtain the prize of holiness, he will leave the gate of the Heavenly City with the dishonoured covenant of the Eternal in his hands, and be able to boast that his faithfulness has been greater than the Word of his God. God would then, to use the bold figure in the Epistle to the Hebrews, be ashamed because men had trusted in Him even unto death, and risked their souls upon the trust, and he had played them false; and therefore is it that however hard may be the road the saint shall travel, and however it may wind before it come to its close, it will one day bring him in by the gate into the City, and every one shall appear before God in Zion. And neither the God Who invited this trust nor they who trusted will be put to shame.

Lest this sublime doctrine should be abused, it is guarded in Holy Scripture by certain wholesome terrors of the soul and certain solemn warnings of the Almighty. The Psalms breathe a spirit of absolute confidence, of sober joy, and of strong hope; yet a Psalmist who has known God and who clings to God, lifts up his heart

in strong supplication that God would not cast him from His presence nor take away His Spirit. No one in the New Testament has asserted the perseverance of the saints with greater strength of reason or more passionate heat of affection than St. Paul, yet it is this apostle who entreats his Christian flock to use all diligence to make their calling and election sure; who is sometimes stricken with fear lest he himself, who had preached the gospel and made converts for Christ, should at last be a castaway. There are also in the Hebrew Epistles certain passages which will always be a battleground between Arminians and Calvinists, and which, at any rate, may make the most confident take heed to his steps and save the most foolish believer from presumption. It is salutary for every one who is walking in the narrow way, which leadeth upward to the stars, to remember the precipices which are on either side and the hopelessness of him who wantonly flings himself over their edge. Should any one who has been cleansed in the blood of Christ trample Christ's sacrifice under foot through persistent love of sin, or should any one who had

learned to call Him Lord deliberately deny His name, then it cannot be with him even as it was with David when he repented, and Peter when he wept bitterly, for this man has hardened his heart, and has forsaken the Lord who redeemed him. Whether it be possible that any disciple of Christ should fall into such utter impenitence may be questioned, but the mere thought of such a possibility is enough to make us give heed unto our steps and to keep steadfastly in the way of faith and righteousness. And if it be a good thing that our ways should at certain places be hedged up with thorns in the trials and affliction of this present world so that we be allured not away from the royal road of the Cross, it is also a good thing that on the right hand and left of our way, when it is in high places of success and of light, there should be precipices whose very sight fills our soul with fear and makes us cling the closer to our guide.

Besides, if any believer should be so left to himself as to imagine that he can sin with impunity or even afford to be careless, he will be quickly undeceived. If God should not cast him off, but should remember His covenant, He

will certainly see to it that this man be saved as by fire. In his sin he never can be saved; but while in his sin he will be visited with strong judgments of the Almighty, so that his own soul, and perhaps the public world, shall behold his punishment. No man will ever be punished more severely than the saint, or have a more overwhelming view of the Divine righteousness. Of all the sufferers in Old Testament history I take it that the chief was not Pharaoh nor Jezebel, but the patriarch Jacob; for every sin he committed he suffered double, and after the kind in which he had sinned, till he went down to his grave a sorrowful man, sanctified, but sanctified by the rod. David fell into the snare which besets rich and sensuous natures, so that he disgraced his own character and the name of God which he had mentioned, and the last years of David's life were years of trouble and of shame. He was not finally rejected, but he was severely chastised, and remains a monument as much of the righteousness as of the faithfulness of God. If it be difficult to understand the cowardice of Simon Peter's denial, it is more difficult to estimate the bitter-

ness of his tears. Many and comfortable are the promises given unto the backslider in Holy Scripture, but searching and severe has been his discipline, so that when he returns unto the Lord it is with bent head and broken heart, never again to depart from the ways of righteousness.

Doubtless every one who has obeyed the invitation of God and set sail for the new world with an honest heart shall come at last into the fair haven of peace, whatever storm and head winds he may meet on the way; but all will not come in after the same fashion. Some ships will make the harbour mouth with difficulty, with torn sails and bare decks, and heavy losses—hardly saved; others will enter the harbour with a flowing tide and a following wind, their sails full set and showing white in the light of the sun, and they shall have an abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Some believers may only escape to the shore on broken pieces of their ship, humiliated and half-dead, like David; others, like St. Paul, will come in as treasure ships, bearing with them the argosy of sacrifices and of services beyond all human reckoning, and

at the very sight of their coming the inhabitants of the other land shall gather to bid them welcome and to escort them into the presence of the King.

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

XI

THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH

No doctrine of the Catholic Faith has been more keenly debated than that which defines the Church; for while Christian people unite with their lips in saying, according to the final form of the fifth century, 'I believe in the Holy Catholic Church,' they differ widely in their hearts about the spiritual content of the words. There are some, both of ancient and modern times, who have so exalted this belief that the Church has seemed to be the controller, and not merely one of the channels of the Divine Grace; to be a mediator between the human soul and Christ, not merely His servant for the help of the soul; to be the tyrant of the human reason, not merely the teacher which brings to that reason its most perfect light. Such persons have not intended to do despite unto the Lord Whom they reverence, or any injury to the souls of His

people whom they love, but rather to make Christ visible and to bring Him nearer to a faithless world by His body the Church, and to supply to Christ's disciples, walking by faith and suffering daily from the bondage of things seen, that audible voice and that tangible assistance which would be theirs if the Lord were visibly present in the world. No doubt there have been others who have exalted the Church in order that they might exalt themselves, and to whom the Body of Christ has simply been a worldly corporation — more opulent and exacting than the Roman Empire, because its authority was over the souls of men and its revenue only limited by their devotion to the Lord,—whose government they seized and whose material riches they exploited for their own benefit. 'Let us enjoy the papacy,' said Pope Leo X., that pure child of the Renaissance and baptized Pagan, 'now that God has given it to us.' Pope Leo, however, and the ambitious and sacrilegious ecclesiastics, whom he so perfectly represents, have been condemned by the consensus of the Christian Church, whose purity they outraged; and it were not just to cast this Simon Magus in

the face either of Irenæus of the second century or Newman of the nineteenth century. Nothing has indeed been less worldly and selfish, nothing more pure and chivalrous, than the devotion of certain saintly persons to the Church, which is to their faith the Bride of their Lord and the Mother of their souls; and if they have exceeded in this passion and have disturbed the balance of truth, it has been only through that limitation of the human intellect which finds it hard to preserve the proportion of faith, and through an admirable enthusiasm of love, which saw in His Church the continued Incarnation of their Lord.

Certain other persons — who are found in modern rather than in ancient times—have so reduced and emptied the idea of the Church that they seem to imagine it to be a voluntary society, created for the highest ends, such, for instance, as a Bible or Missionary Society, rather than an institution, founded and inhabited by our Lord Jesus Christ; a friendly fellowship created by the social instincts of men rather than the earthly home of the soul, builded and appointed by God; a private witness to spiritual things rather than the commissioned ambassador

of the Most High. This modest idea of the Church has commended itself to many pious people, not by its dignity, or spirituality, in which qualities it is very deficient, but for two accidental, though no doubt influential reasons; because it affords no opportunity for what such persons would consider priestly usurpation, and sacramental superstition, and because it fits in with the theory of democracy and realises that spirit of brotherhood which Christ certainly taught, and for which we all long. No doubt there are on this side of thought some to whom the Church is still less spiritual and indeed is nothing more than a philanthropic or ethical agency — distributing charitable aid to poor people, and teaching the less intelligent classes of the community that they must not steal or injure their neighbour; but here again it would not be fair to cast this arid and secular position in the face of a multitude of devout Christians, to whom the Church may after all be only a society, but to whom it is a society, wherein the disciples of the unseen Lord meet for the closest fellowship, and which exists to preach the gospel of His person and His Cross.

When the atmosphere of the day is secular and what is supernatural is apt to be supposed untrue, it is inevitable that the Divinity of the Church of God should be as much suspected as the Deity of her head; and since Christian folk are unconsciously influenced by this time-spirit, it might be a good corrective to consider what place has been given to the Church in the Gospels and in the Epistles as well as by the Fathers and Theologians, the Mystics and the Saints of all ages. It is true that our Lord only twice refers to the body of His disciples under the name of the Church, but on one of the two occasions He declares that the Church is to be founded upon a rock, and that He Himself will build it; that the Church will be a fortress so outstanding that it will provoke the utmost strength of the powers of evil, but will be so impregnable that the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Upon the other occasion he commanded that if any man had been wronged by his brother, and the offender would not listen to private remonstrance, an appeal should be made to the Supreme Authority; and that if he would not hear the Church, he was to be considered as a

heathen man and a publican. The Lord also added that what the Church bound on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever the Church loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven. If our Lord had made no other reference to His Church than in those two passages of St. Matthew's Gospel, then we were entitled to form the conclusion that the Church has been in some sense intrusted with the power and with the authority of God Himself. Readers of the Gospels will, however, remember that those two brief but most weighty references of the Lord are supplemented and amplified by His teaching on the Kingdom. While our Lord mentions Church twice, He mentions Kingdom one hundred and twelve times, and it goes without saying that the two words must be correlated before we can understand the mind of Jesus. This is a subject on which many learned persons have written and on which further light will always be welcome, but it is sufficient for my purpose to make a suggestion that the kingdom consists of men of a certain ethical character, together with the works which they do and the influence which they exert in human society; that the kingdom,

therefore, has no limits except the race, and needs no organisation: that it is secret, being within and not without a man; that it is subtle as a fragrance, viewless, like the wind, pervasive as the atmosphere, and yet visible in its effects of righteousness, joy, and peace. That the Church consists of the members of the kingdom united together in one body, which is organised and visible, whose members are bound together by a solemn covenant, and whose different duties are allotted to them by their Head; which has a mission to perform by visible means and an authority to exercise by appointed officers; which receives men into its fellowship, and nurtures them, and chastises them, and can even cast them out. The kingdom is as it were the Jewish people, scattered abroad without political institutions and without political status, but showing everywhere the same features of face, holding with all their soul their fathers' faith and keeping in their integrity the commandments of Moses. And the Church is, as it were, the Jewish people, organised as a nation with the rights of citizenship, and a formal constitution, with the offices and the privileges and the obligations of a state

Anything, therefore, which Jesus said of the kingdom applies to the Church in her ethical and far-spread influence on human life. The Church is indeed the capital of the kingdom, where are gathered its riches and glory, its spiritual authority, and means of action. And, therefore, if any one thinketh lightly of the Church, he so far despises the kingdom of heaven, which Christ everywhere magnifies, declaring it to be a pearl of great price, for which a man would be wise to sell all that he had, and the great feast which God had prepared for all who would come.

When we leave the Gospels and cross the threshold of the Apostolic Scriptures, we find the Church filling the imagination and commanding the devotion of the holy writers. It is to the Church in the Acts of the Apostles that the Lord adds daily 'such as are being saved'; it is to the Church that Paul and Barnabas rehearse all that God had done for them; again and again St. Paul salutes and greets the Church; he declares that by the Church the wisdom of God is made known, and mourns as his chief sin that he once persecuted the Church; for love of the Church

Christ gave Himself, and He will not be satisfied till He has presented it unto Himself a glorious Church; and when St. Paul giveth glory unto God, Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask of Him, it is 'in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end.'

From the days of the Apostles the Church of Christ has had a place second only to her Lord in the hearts of thoughtful and reverent men. Upon her august claims and gracious ministries, upon her spiritual glory and kindly shelter, the early Christian fathers expatiated with intense conviction and warm personal affection. With the sanction of Holy Scripture they called her by the most tender word in human speech—their Mother, and this title for the Church of Christ has never ceased from the speech of His disciples. 'He cannot have God for his Father,' Cyprian used to say, 'who has not the Church for his mother.' If it be thought that Cyprian may somewhat exceed in his churchly fashion, and if in the minds of some he be suspected through his exaltation of the holy ministry, then let such persons turn to Calvin's *Institutes* and read the

fourth book on the 'Holy Catholic Church.' Referring to the visible Church under her title of Mother, this great theologian and acute thinker writes: 'There is no other means of entering into life unless she conceiveth us in the womb and give us birth, unless she nourish us at her breast, and, in short, keep us under her charge and government until, divested of mortal flesh, we become like the angels.' Again: 'Beyond the pale of the Church no forgiveness of sins, no salvations, can be hoped for.' 'The abandonment of the Church,' Calvin declares, 'is always fatal,' and he goes the length of saying 'that all who reject the spiritual food of the soul divinely offered to them by the hands of the Church, deserve to perish of hunger and famine.' Was it wonderful with this teaching before her mind that the Church of Scotland should have always held a just and worthy idea of the Church visible, and should have gladly accepted and always maintained the statement in the confession of faith, 'Unto this Catholic Visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world, and

doth by His own presence and Spirit, according to His promise, make them effectual thereunto'? No Church, and I do not except the Roman Church, has administered discipline with a more profound conviction of its spiritual utility and her own solemn responsibility for the souls which Christ purchased with His blood. 'To these officers (that is, the officers of the Church) the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed,' so runs the article in the Confession, 'by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut that kingdom against the impenitent, both by the word and censures; and to open it unto penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censure, as occasion shall require.' Persons acquainted with Church life in Scotland will know that the Holy Table does not lie open there to unbelievers and evil livers, but is carefully 'fenced' and guarded. A communicant—especially in country districts where life is simpler, and the traditions of the past stronger—will not approach the sacrament if living in any sin, but will confess the sin unto the minister, and invite the discipline of the Church; but it may not be known to

many that the whole system of discipline is minutely and carefully regulated by law. That there are offences which cannot be dealt with by the minister and elders of the local Church, but have to be referred to the superior spiritual court, and that there is a graduated system of Church censure, 'admonition,' 'rebuke,' 'suspension' from the sacraments, 'suspension from office,' where the person holds any office, 'deposition' which is solemnly pronounced in the name of the Lord Jesus, and 'excommunication.' Such censures, when inflicted on right grounds, are declared to be 'sanctioned and ratified' by the Church's Living Head in heaven. Absolution is pronounced by the moderator in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is only granted when the person under discipline gives 'hopeful evidence of penitence,' and it is granted by the Church on the presumption that the offender has 'obtained pardon through His atoning blood.' Brilliant historians of an unbelieving and cynical temper, like Mr. Buckle, in his *History of Civilisation*, may make themselves merry over the details of Church discipline, and wax indignant over the tyranny of the Scots clergy, but it

remains a suggestive circumstance that an intractable and stiff-necked people, who have ever been jealous of their independence, and been willing to die rather than be slaves to any person, should have been so submissive to the Church. Perhaps it would be difficult to find a more convincing evidence of the majesty of the Church of Christ and her inherent claim upon the conscience of believing people; while the high intelligence and practical ability of the Scots nation go to show that if the Church in that land has sometimes been a severe, as she has always been a faithful, Mother, she has been abundantly justified of her children.

It is surely also in this connection a fact worthy of note that in proportion as the believer has been touched with the spirit of poetry, or, in other words, as his piety has been refined and sublimated, he has had a special vision of the beauty of the Church, and an intense devotion to her service. From beyond Jordan the lonely exile recalls the day when he went to the house of God with God's people, 'with the voice of joy and praise, with the multitude that kept holyday,' and his prayer is that God would send

His light and His truth, and then would he go 'unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.' Another saint cries out at the thought of the temple which was to him the home of God and the symbol of the Church, 'How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts!' and declares that he envies the happy birds which make their nests under the eaves of God's house. The faithful churchman of the former dispensation is glad when the time comes round that he shall go 'into the house of the Lord,' and he prays that 'peace may be within her walls and prosperity within her palaces.' When the captivity of the Church is turned, he is 'like them that dream,' and far away by the rivers of Babylon he weeps when he remembers Sion. There is nothing on earth to him so strong as the Church 'which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever,' and this is the height of all blessing 'to see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.' No doubt this and many another noble passage from the Psalmists and the Prophets are the voice of poetry; but it is to be remembered that poetry and religion move in the same sphere, and those writers,

being wonderfully inspired by the Holy Ghost, expressed the emotion which stirred the mind of many a silent believer, but which he never could have caught and cast into words. The first songs of the New Testament Church were awakened by the Messiah of God, at Whose coming the heavenly host and the saints on earth burst into praise, and the last song shall also be 'unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood.' For the risen Christ is the King of the Church, and to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Before, however, the New Testament Scriptures had been completed, the sacred muse was again fired with the ancient theme which had moved the chief singers of Israel. St. John, sick at heart as he looked out upon that ancient world, turned from Rome, the mistress of foul vices and the persecutor of the saints, and being in the Spirit, as men must be who can see such things, he beheld the 'saints who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb,' and the armies of heaven 'clothed in fine linen, white and clean.' He saw the 'holy city coming down from God out of heaven, and

prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.' And at the sight of the holy Jerusalem, with her twelve gates of pearl, and her streets of pure gold, and her walls of jasper, and the glory of the Lord as her sun, the servant of Jesus Christ cut off from all fellowship save that of his Lord, and seeing no light anywhere save through the gates of the city, beheld the glory of the Church, the Lamb's Wife, and was satisfied.

It has not been given unto the saints of later days to be touched with so heavenly a flame of inspiration, but they have not been indifferent to the excellent glory of the Church. Among the sons of the Church of England none appears to the writer to have more perfectly caught her spirit,—

> A fine aspect in fit array,
> Neither too mean, nor yet too gay,—

than the author of the *Temple*, and surely the wisest, gentlest, holiest pastor who ever cared for the souls of countryfolk. Within George Herbert the special affection of Hebrew piety seemed to revive, and all which belonged to the Church was dear to him and the sign of heavenly mysteries. From the Church porch and stile,

from the Church lock and key and the Church floor, to the pulpit and the Communion Table, the ordained ministers, and the Holy Scriptures —everything was sacred, and he served her with the mingled devotion of a courtier to his queen and a son to his mother.

> I joy, dear mother, when I view
> Thy perfect lineaments and hue,
> Both sweet and bright:
> Beauty in thee takes up her place,
> And dates her letters from thy face,
> When she doth write.

Nor had our Scots saint and mystic Samuel Rutherford any less a love to Christ's Kirk, who through all his impassioned letters mourns less his own sufferings than the shame put on Christ's Bride, and would willingly be in bonds if the Church of Scotland went free.

That Christian has missed one of the most spiritual emotions of our faith who has not felt the fascination of the Church, which is above all controversies, behind all divisions, holier than all Christians, kindlier than any home; for which a man might be willing to die, which he ought to love even as he loveth Christ.

When we come to define the Church which

has such a place in Christian thought and love, then we are at once face to face with a certain distinction which has led to much debate, and, it may be added, much confusion of thought. The Confession of Faith speaks of 'the Visible Church, which is also Catholic or Universal' under the Gospel; and the Nineteenth Article of Religion says, 'The Visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered.' This form of words implies that there is a sense in which the Church is not visible, and the distinction comes practically to be between the Church of Christ, which consists of all the members of its body, who, from the beginning to the end, shall be saved through His sacrifice, and made perfect before God in Him, and that number of the same multitude who at any time are in this world and are bound together in Christian fellowship, of which the sign shall be those mentioned in the above article (although there may be other notes) that the 'pure Word is preached and the Sacraments are duly administered.' Against this distinction many pious and learned theologians of

the present day have strongly protested, contending that it has no warrant in Apostolic thought or early usage, and they are also haunted with the fear that the practical use of this distinction will be to belittle the Church Visible — the assembly of faithful people—and to palliate the sin of schism as well as to lower the obligation of holiness and the claims of brotherhood. Whether the distinction be necessary in thought and be implied in the teaching of our Lord and St. Paul is a matter to which I am coming, but I wish to repudiate the suggestion that belief in the Church of all the ages, which is the Bride of the Lamb, should sap any one's loyalty to that portion of the Church which has not yet crossed the river but is still militant on earth, or that the profound sense that the Church of Christ is greater than the Church of Rome, or the Church of England, or the Church of Scotland, either separately or all together, must on that account render a Christian indifferent to any Church which is one of the Visible representatives of the Spiritual body of Christ or lessen his grief that, say, there should be in one city both a Roman and an Anglican Bishop exercising jurisdiction,

and claiming the loyalty of Christ's people, to the confusion of faith, and the disunity of the Visible Church. With this spectacle before his eyes—and it is one of the most painful in the spiritual world—one must hold either that the Roman Bishop and his people, among whom he knows many saints, or the Anglican Bishop and his people, of whom he holds as high a judgment, are in a state of wilful separation from the Church of Christ, and therefore, to use Calvin's words, are 'beyond the pale of salvation,' or he must fall back upon some larger conception of the Church, which will unchurch neither of those congregations of Christian people. At the same time he may firmly believe that it is only through human ignorance and human sin that this division has come to pass, and that there ought to be in every city or land only one great congregation which shall be the Visible representative of the Body of Christ. Very likely Calvin may be censured because he speaks, like the Nineteenth Article, of the Visible Church instead of saying only the Church; but certainly his intention was not to justify unwarrantable separation from the historic Church of his day,

since no one, not even the theologians of the Roman Church, has denounced more strongly the self-sufficiency and pride of those who call themselves by the name of Christ, and yet refuse to live in Christ's Household.

When one inquires whether this way of looking at the Church from two sides, as it were, to which the words, less than felicitous, 'visible' and 'invisible' have been given can be justified, then he must turn, first of all to the Gospels to discover whether it was in the mind of Christ, Who is the supreme Reason. There surely can be no doubt, and that will be taken up later, that Jesus did not leave His Disciples to form some kind of society of their own accord, but that He established it with all the necessary conditions of such a body, and that His desire was that His Church should be Visible and Undivided, but there seems to me as little doubt that He had a larger vision which was not confined to the Visible Society in the world. He is declared by the fourth Evangelist to be the 'True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and wherever this light has been welcomed and obeyed, there, doubtless, have been

Christ's Disciples; 'and Thou, O Lord,' we may say with confidence, 'wast their Redeemer, though the preached Word was ignorant of them, and the Church Visible acknowledged them not.' He were a bold man, and something worse than bold, who should deny the Saints outside the pale of Judaism and of Christianity, and he surely holds less than the truth of the Incarnation, and does less than honour to the Lord, the only Saviour of mankind, who does not ascribe all virtue in such men unto Him Whom, not having known, they followed. Some place must be found for those lonely, beautiful souls who by their faith and charity have put Christian folk to shame, and, as there is no just use of words by which they could be called members of the Church Visible, we gladly acknowledge all who 'lived or live with right reason, as members of the Church Invisible.' No blame, of course, can be attached to them because they did not belong to a Church of which they had never heard; but our Master goes further, and extends charity to those who, being in contact with the company of His Disciples, yet for some reason remain separate. When St. John, seeing some one cast-

ing out devils in Jesus' name, forbade him, and that in the true ecclesiastical spirit of all ages, 'because he followeth not us,' Jesus said, 'Forbid him not . . . for He that is not against us is on our part.' And in the same spirit was that great saying of His which remains for ever the standard of judgment as to who are Christians and who are not. 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' When Jesus taught the Samaritan woman the way everlasting, He told her that the exclusive dispensation of religion, binding it up with one nation and one form, was passing away, and that in days to come every one would be counted acceptable with the Father who worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth. And when Jesus laid down this weighty principle, we are not to understand that there would be no longer a Church, with its officers and its rites, or that it would not be the duty and privilege of Christ's people to belong to it; but surely we are to understand that all men who worship God with a sincere and pure heart are within the Church. One also finds himself, I humbly submit, in the larger atmosphere when a woman from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, an

alien from the covenant and promises of Israel, was, for the trying of her faith, refused by the Lord in language which He borrowed from the bigotry of the Jewish Church. He distinguished between the Jews who were children and her who was a dog. She vanquished Him in the end Who was willing to be vanquished, and the Lord not only granted her request, but declared His amazement at her faith. If faith be the bond that binds the soul to Christ, conscious or unconscious, then there was not greater faith in Israel than that of this Canaanite woman. Is it not also significant that this distinction of Invisible and Visible receives a sanction from our Lord's two related ideas of the Kingdom and the Church? For is not the Kingdom that universal sphere of goodness in heaven and in earth, from which no good man and no good thing can be excluded, but whose influence is secret and subtle, and the Church that corporate institution which can receive and cast out, which can be attacked and triumph over attack? If any one have the Kingdom of God within him, and there is the home of the Kingdom, then surely he must belong to the larger Church, for

Christ is his King, and Christ's Spirit dwells in his heart.

When we pass into the period when the Church was an organised and recognised institution, and when we read the Epistles of St. Paul, it is a little perplexing to understand his attitude, and his references to the Church appear sometimes to have an air of unreality. Nothing can be more stately or more beautiful than the address to the Church with which he opens his letters. It is to the 'Saints' he writes, to the 'Faithful in Christ Jesus,' to them who are 'chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world,' to persons 'called to be holy and without blame before Him in love.' According to St. Paul, the Church is a body of people, whether in Ephesus or in Rome, separate from this world, united in Christ Jesus, showing forth His life, and holy even as He is holy. When we turn to any particular body of Christians whom St. Paul addresses after this lofty fashion, we suffer a great disillusionment, for one can hardly imagine a greater contrast between the salutation of St. Paul and the people whom he is addressing, between his description and their likeness.

The members of the early Christian communities were bigoted, jealous, ungrateful, quarrelsome, and their lives were disfigured by gross sins of the heathen life which they had not yet completely thrown off. Nor was it only the purer Churches whom St. Paul addressed as holy; he made no distinction of character in his opening salutation whatever he may have sometimes made of personal feeling. If he called those excellent Philippians, who had been so kind to him and so generous in all their ways, 'saints in Christ Jesus,' he spoke of the Corinthians as 'sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints,' yet he had to complain of the Corinthians that one of their number was guilty of a horrible sin, that some had been intoxicated at the Lord's Supper, that others had despised His Gospel, that others had spoken of himself with contemptuous ingratitude. Surely it is courtesy, or formality, carried to a dangerous extent, to apply the word Saint to such people, and to refer to them as sanctified; yet there never was a man more sincere than St. Paul, never any one who dealt more closely with the facts of spiritual life. What is the explanation of this paradox,

that St. Paul should begin his letter to the Corinthians with the word Saints, and a little later should be using the word fornication?

The explanation must be sought in the magnificent spiritual imagination of St. Paul, which was not confined by the things which are seen and temporal, but lived among the things which are unseen and eternal. Two worlds were his, this imperfect and corrupt world, which is passing away, and the perfect and holy world which remaineth. The real, which was often lamentable enough, disappeared in the vision of St. Paul before the ideal, and he saw not the thing which was, but the thing which was to be. When he looked upon a Christian Disciple, he saw not a Roman slave, ignorant, unclean, half brutalised, beset by the inevitable sins of his lot, an abject of humanity, but he saw a man who had been crucified with Christ upon the Cross, who had died with Christ unto this present world, who had risen with Christ from the dead, breaking all bonds, and now was seated with Christ in the heavenly places. This diseased, and broken, and unsightly man Christ had loved from all eternity; for him Christ had laid down His life,

and this man Christ had purchased with His own precious blood. This was not a bondsman, he was a son of God; he was not a miserable, he had all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places; he was not an evil-doer, he was a Saint. He beheld the man in Christ Jesus, and it was in Christ Jesus St. Paul beheld all things. The life which Christ was living in the heavenly places was the life His Disciples were living in idea, and would one time live in reality; and, therefore, when St. Paul addressed the Church, he thought of it as spiritual, the body of the Lord crucified, dead, risen, holy, the congregation of all the saints. This is the Church Invisible, because in its ideal beauty it can only be seen by faith—by those who can see it in the Lord. Turning, then, as it were from heaven to earth, and from Christ to Christians, he found in Corinth a company of self-conceited, contentious, ungrateful, and evil-living people, whom he must rebuke and teach and guard and endure, if haply, through his work and the grace of God, the real may be purified and elevated till it passes at last into the ideal, and even the Corinthian Church be presented

as a pure Virgin unto Christ. This is the Church Visible; and the contradiction which every one must have felt between the address at the beginning of St. Paul's letter and the contents of the letter is due not to the Apostle's unreality, but to his spirituality, and nothing is more likely to lift the Visible communities of Christian folk above this world and above their own sin than the constant vision of that glorious Body of Christ, which with her Lord is trampling this world and sin and death under her feet. The Church Invisible is at once the condemnation and the inspiration of the Church Visible.

When St. Paul carries about with him this distinction between an unseen perfection and a seen imperfection which are closely related together, he is not thinking otherwise than we do ourselves. There is perfect beauty which is only suggested to us by the finest picture we have ever seen; there is perfect truth which is poorly shadowed by the deepest creeds we say; there is perfect life which is scantily embodied in the strongest man; there is perfect holiness which puts to shame the best man we have known. Within our minds we carry those ideals, and we

see the real reaching after them and witnessing to them; and so behind the visible lies the invisible. If there be no other Church of Christ than that which we behold, torn by schism, coarsened by the world's spirit, corrupted by gross sin, then it is vain to talk of the Lord's Body, and the Bride of the Lamb. As one looks, however, more closely into the life of Christ's Disciples on earth, he sees the faint traces of a character which is not of this world, a hard-fought battle with sin which carries with it the pledge of victory, and an aspiration after the Highest which is the prophecy of its own fulfilment. This character means some type after which it is being formed; this fight means some living force which is working to an end; this aspiration means some hope which will not make ashamed. The light begins to shine through the coarse screen, and as we look we forget the Church Visible, and are comforted and inspired by the mystical figure of the Church, invisible to sight, but visible and altogether lovely unto every one who being in the Spirit hath seen an open heaven and Jesus at the right hand of God.

If any one believes that the Church is the

mystical Body of the Lord, it follows that he must believe also in her unity, for the Body of Christ cannot be divided, but must be one through all the ages, and behind all circumstances. Between the innumerable Saints from the first, who saw Christ afar off, and reached forward to receive Him, to the last, who shall hear the call of the Evangel, there will be incalculable differences of character, of experience, of knowledge, and of service, but in heart the Saints will be one—one in faith, because they believe in the same Lord; one in hope, because they wait for the same event; one in charity, because the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. When Isaiah and St. John and St. Francis and John Bunyan meet, that wherein they differ in time and associations and theology fades away, and they greet one another as brethren in Christ Jesus. Being one with Christ and rivals in their love to the Lord, they are united one to other in a bond which the influences of this present time could not break, which the life of eternity will only confirm. When the devout disciple receives the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Lord, and celebrates His dying love, he

is united not only to the little company of fellow-communicants in a house made with hands, but also with all Christ's Disciples throughout the world, with those also whom He loves and has lost awhile, and with all the Saints who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Though he be the least of all the Saints, and the chief of sinners, yet hath he a place in the heart of the Lord, and his name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Therefore the chief of Saints must bid him welcome, and will not dare to cast him out. This is the one perfect fellowship within human knowledge, wherein all have one mind and one heart and one life, and within this fellowship is made known the mystery of the Divine will, 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.'

No imagery is too strong or too intimate to illustrate and enforce this unity, which was one of the deepest desires of the Lord, which He died to make possible, which He lives to make real. The centre of the unity is ever Christ Himself risen from the dead and alive for evermore; and

the condition of the unity is fellowship with Him by the Holy Ghost. He is the vine whom His Father planteth, and every disciple is a branch thereof, drawing his sap from the central stock and partner with every other branch, because he is partner with Christ. No branch can cast out another branch; no branch can add another. One power only can engraft; one power only can cut off. For the unity stands not in the relation of the branches one to another, but in the relation of them all to Christ. The Lord is the foundation-stone which the builders did despise, but Who has become for ever the Head of the corner. And upon this foundation, not upon creeds, nor rites, but on the living person of Christ, rests every Christian soul, as a living stone upon the one foundation. Resting upon this one stone the others are compactly built together, and form a Temple for the habitation of God; apart from this foundation they are but a heap of stones scattered, disconnected, unprofitable. If any one be separate from Christ, then is he no part of the Divine Temple; if any one be resting on the Lord as his God and Saviour, then is he so built into the structure of God's

Eternal House that no hand of man can remove the stone. Christ is the Head, and His Disciples are members of the Body, some of greater honour and some of less, but yet each one a part of the living organism. By faith the disciple has been born again into this new life, and by faith he continues therein; and though he be the humblest of all the members of Christ's Body, the minutest and most distant part, yet to it the blood flows from the heart, and it also is directed by the Head; and if it is hurt, every member of the Body suffers also, and the Head is the first to feel and sorrow. Christ is the Bridegroom, and the Church is the Bride, whom He has not only wooed, but also redeemed; and so every member of the Church is married unto Christ in a covenant which cannot be broken. From Christ the believer receives the right to his name, under the protection of Christ he lives, between him and Christ no one has any power to come, and the intimacy of the marriage state is but the shadow of the union between Christ and the souls which make His Church.

So profound and mysterious is this union first between Christ and the soul, and then in Christ

between all Christian souls, that the Lord uses illustrations which transcend human knowledge. The unity of the Church is to be so spiritual, so unlimited, so lifted above time and space and every visible condition, so tender also, so gracious, and so holy, that it is to be like unto the relation of the Persons in the Holy Trinity. As the High Priest and Head of His Church, Christ lifted up His hands to God before He offered His sacrifice, and now lifts them up for ever in the heavenly places, with the signs of sacrifice upon them, that the multitude of His Disciples may be one in God the Father and in Him, according to the measure wherein the Father and the Son are one. As the Father and the Son have ever one thought, so that the Son is the Word of God, and have done one work, so that whatsoever the Son saw the Father do, that He also did; and one love, so that the Son lay in the bosom of the Father; and one life, so that the Son liveth by the Father; the Church is to be won in truth, in work, in love, and in life. 'I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.'

The unity of the Church, according to the idea of the Lord, is first of all spiritual, and would

exist although there were no visible organised body upon earth, as the unity of the Trinity existed before the incarnation of the Son, yet no one can read the mediatorial prayer of Christ without being persuaded that the unity of the Church should be realised and presented to the world. When the world saw a multitude of people of every nation, of every degree, of every disposition, of every circumstance, bound together in one, for the most heavenly ends and on the most gracious conditions, then the world would have an unanswerable evidence that a new power was working in the midst of human life, and that God Himself was with us. The Incarnation of the Lord would be as it were continued and vindicated by this vast harmonious spiritual body which He inhabited, and the world would know 'that Thou hast sent me and hast loved them as Thou hast loved me.' It were strange, therefore, and one is amazed that devout and earnest men can be satisfied with such an idea of the Church Visible, that Christ should give no directions for the organisation and government of this great society on earth, but should leave His Disciples to form societies of any kind they

pleased, as many as might be convenient, and at any time which seemed expedient. The question is not whether the Jewish synagogue had not a certain system of government which was partly taken over into the Christian Church; nor whether the union of Christians in some sort of society was not a fulfilment of a natural desire for fellowship; nor whether the creation of a religious society did not receive a certain sanction and support from the existence of many philanthropic guilds throughout the Roman Empire in the first century; nor is it whether the Christian Church did not develop the original organisation given by the Lord and His Apostles. The question is this, whether Christ Himself laid down with His Divine authority the foundation of that universal society which was to be on earth the embodiment of the Church Invisible and Eternal. Is not the evidence conclusive? Did He not preach during all His ministry the doctrine of the Kingdom, and is not kingdom the strongest word for society? Did He not declare that He was Himself its Head, Whose teaching alone was authoritative, Whose presence was omnipotent, Whose judgment was to be final? Was there not

a condition of admission into this society—faith in Himself? Was there not a condition of fellowship—love to God and man? Were there not to be rewards to them who were faithful, punishments for them who were unfaithful? Did He not call twelve officers and place in their hands the government of the Church and its treasure of truth? Did He not institute two sacraments, the one to be the sign of union to Himself and through Him to the Church, the other to be the sign of communion with Him and through Him with the Church? With a chief officer, with rules and rites surely we have a society which may develop its organisation to meet new circumstances, and apply its power in new directions, but which from the beginning has a constitution and an authority; and we are justified in saying that Christ gave her constitution to the Church during the days of His ministry, and that constitution was carried into effect in the period of His Apostles.

It is difficult also to resist the conviction that Christ intended that His Visible Church should be one society the world over instead of being divided into sections warring with one another

and making sport for an unbelieving world. Surely every one will agree that it were more becoming, and therefore more in keeping with the mind of Christ, that in every country there should be one Church—the Church of Scotland or of England, by which is intended the Church of Christ in Scotland or England—and not half a dozen Churches; that in every parish there should be one place of worship where all should meet in the name of the Lord, not half a dozen fighting for the possession of the people. Nothing can more certainly hinder the faith of the world, and nothing has so weakened the energies of Christian people and so afflicted their hearts, as the schisms and feuds by which Christ's Visible Church has been rent asunder.

When the Church Visible, which is the shadow of the Church Invisible, is rent—for the spiritual Body must ever be undivided—then the cause is always one and the same, and it ought to lie much more heavily both upon the heart and conscience of believing Christians. The division of the Church into sects, whether Roman, Anglican, Scots, or Nonconformists, since any division does mean section, is not an accident,

nor a misfortune, and certainly not an ingenious design to stir up the Church into greater activity, but is a distinct and flagrant sin. If Christian people, gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus, and calling one another brethren, had obeyed Christ's commandments and yielded to the guidance of the Lord's Spirit, they had lived in purity and in charity, as did the Christians of Pentecost, and the Church on earth had been one to-day, as the Church in heaven is one, and she had been 'fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.' Wherever there is holiness there is unity, wherever there is unholiness there is strife, and it was because the vision of the Lord grew dim and discipline was relaxed, and the world cast her tangling veil round the Christian heart, and brotherly love died into ashes, that the fair Church of Christ was scattered into contending fragments and became a scandal in the face of men. No doubt the divisions of the Church have been made the means of calling her to repentance and restoring purity, of moving her to good works and vast sacrifices, were it only through the criticism and rivalry of separate Christian bodies; but this

does not mean that such divisions were the methods of the Lord, or that He had any pleasure when one crieth, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Cephas.' What it means is that the Lord, Whose grace is marvellous as it is mighty, has caused light to arise out of darkness, and has made the wrath of men to praise Him, so that in the good which has come from this vast evil we have another illustration of the Apostle's triumphant word, 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'

While schism is a sin both against Christ, the Head of the Church, and the Church, which is His Body, it is not to be taken for granted that the sinners are those who have separated from the original and historic visible society. It may be, and it often has been, that people have left that branch of the Christian Church into which they were born and baptized on grounds which cannot be justified — because their pride had been offended, or their self-will checked, or because their brethren were poor and they desired the company of rich men. Secession from the Church of one's fathers on such grounds proves a frivolous and worldly temper of mind,

and has deserved the censure both of Christ's people and of the Lord No one ought to leave his fold unless he be driven out, and unless he have good reason to believe that the Shepherd has been driven out with him, and in that case the fold to which he goes is the fold of Christ, and he carries the Church with him. If at any time the Church, for instance, becomes so impure that the Ten Commandments of Moses, to say nothing of the greater eleventh commandment of the Lord, are broken without rebuke, and the name of Christ's ordained ministers becomes a synonym in the satire of the day for a rascal and an evil liver, and if redress be asked from the governors of the Church and be refused, then, in honour to Christ and to conscience, nothing remains for Christian people but to depart from this polluted place and to build another purer home for the Lord. When such faithful men depart with sore hearts, they leave not the Church; they leave what is for the time the synagogue of Satan; they leave not their Lord, but the spirit of evil which has taken His place. The Lord goes with them in their exodus because they are keeping His words and following in

His steps, and they are not the schismatics who are cleaving to their Saviour in obedience and holiness, but they are the schismatics who have denied the Lord and put Him to shame in His own house, who have driven out both the Master and His Disciples. If the chiefs of an army become disloyal to their king, and enter into an open alliance with the enemy, then they are not the mutineers, even though they be only private soldiers, who break the bonds of discipline and desert in order to reform the army in the name of their king and for the support of his cause. They carry the colours with them which are of no use to the other side; they are the true army, and they have kept their sacramental oath. When the king holds his court and judges between the loyal and the disloyal, he will not punish the soldiers who disobeyed the order of treason, but he will sharply judge the generals who betrayed their trust. And for such generals to accuse such soldiers and in such circumstances of mutiny—for the Borgias to accuse the Saints of disloyalty—is the most monstrous irony in history.

Suppose, again, the State should lay so strong

and profane a hand upon the Church that the civil power, through, it may be, an unbelieving and evil-living man, appoints the highest officers of Christ's house, and the Church must receive them whether they be spiritual or unspiritual men, and must even admit them to their offices with the sacred rites of Christ's appointment, till it be such an one as Charles II. or George IV., who reigns over Christ's Church. What, then, is the duty of His true disciples when they have done their utmost to cast out this usurper and to restore to the Church her freedom in Christ Jesus, and have failed because the world within the Church has become stronger than her Lord? Must they not leave this Egypt and all its treasure of riches and of rank and go out into the wilderness to serve Him in peace Who lived not in palaces, Who knew not where to lay His head? Will the Lord remain with Herod Antipas or go with His Disciples? Is this institution the Church of the Galilean or the creation of kings? Have they not been true lovers of the Bride of Christ, who could not bear to see her amid the luxury and seduction of Solomon's palace, but have brought her out, where in simplicity and

in poverty she may keep the covenant of her heart with her beloved? They are not the schismatics whose love to Christ many waters could not quench, nor could the floods drown. They are the worst of schismatics, who, for the sake of a fair vineyard, whose keepers bring each one 'a thousand pieces of silver,' would sell the chastity of Christ's pure Bride.

When the Church Visible has been divided by her own sin, a new situation is created, and it is vain for any part of the divided Church to claim to be the original Church with an exclusive succession and authority. The Church of Rome made the position intolerable for the Church of England in the sixteenth century, and the Church of England compelled many of her godly ministers to leave her communion, though not the Communion of the Lord, for conscience' sake, in the seventeenth century, and the Church of Scotland, by slavish submission to the State, lost a goodly portion of her clergy and people in 1843. Amid this lamentable confusion no Church has any right to exalt its head above its neighbours, but each Church must prove its right to be a true representative of

Christ's one Church. Various tests may be justly proposed, but each one ought to be charitably applied. One is, that a Church hold the faith of the Saints and preach the pure Gospel of Christ, and that the two Sacraments of Christ's appointment be reverently administered. Another is, that her members keep the commandments of the Lord, and live together in brotherly love, showing forth the Lord's life, and commending Him unto the world by their talk and conversation. The chief and final test must always be that laid down by the Lord Himself, and which cannot be evaded—'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Wherever people live the Christ life, there surely are so many Christians, or else the evidence of religion has no meaning, and the relation between the soul and Jesus Christ is only a name. If twenty people separate themselves from the historic Church in some age of intolerable corruption, and meet to worship the Lord in an upper room, each one a true believer in His name, and a humble follower in His steps, are they to be considered outside the Church of God and the pale of salvation? If this be so, then Christ and

the Church are in sharp collision, and one or the other must be wrong. The Church cuts off their names from her roll, but they are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. The Church casts them forth from her fellowship, but Christ has them in His heart. The Church holds out no hope for them, but Christ has gone to heaven to prepare a place for them. When Christ said, 'Him that cometh unto Me,' those twenty people came, and now the word of Christ holdeth true, 'I will in no wise cast (him) out.' Excommunicated by the Church, they are received by the Lord; condemned by the Church, they are justified by the Lord; persecuted by the Church, they are comforted by the Lord. Who shall separate between them and Christ? Who can deprive them of His love and of His friendship? When they are cast out, Christ also is cast out; where they go He goes; where they live He lives; where they suffer He suffers; and in the world to come, where He is there they also shall be, or else the invitations of the Gospel and the promises of the Lord shall be broken, and the sacrifice and intercession of the Lord be of no avail. We do not come to our Lord through

the Church, and no authority of the Church can make us a member of His Body; we come into the Church by coming to Christ, and he is in the Church now and for ever who is in Christ Jesus, a member of the Church Spiritual and Eternal, although the whole of the Church Visible should declare him to be accursed. When the Bishop of Vasona was pronouncing the degradation of Savonarola, he was so shaken, as he might well be by his spiritual insolence, that he made a mistake in the formula of excommunication. 'I separate thee from the Church Militant and Triumphant,' he said, whereupon Savonarola cried in a tone that pierced to the soul of all who heard, 'From the Church Militant, not from the Church Triumphant, for that is not within thy power.' It is possible to cast out from the Visible society, and many a saint of God has been cast out, from the Lord Himself, Who was excommunicated by the Jewish Church, to the Prophet of Florence, who was degraded by the Romans; but no man can cast his brother from the Church, which is in God the Father and in our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Hoc enim tuum non est' is a mighty truth, beating down the pride of

men and setting a limit to their power. It is the protection of Christian liberty and the vindication of the supreme authority of Christ, Who is Lord in His own house. He that believeth and he that loveth is the friend of Jesus; and where two or three disciples are gathered together in the Lord's name, there is the Church, for there is Christ. Heresies there are and schisms, 'Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are His." And, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."'

While the unity of the Church is in its essence spiritual, depending upon the relation of the soul to Christ, and the denial of this spirituality is profanity, yet every true disciple of Christ must pray also for that unity which is present and visible. He is not to be approved who belittles it; he will not be lightly judged who has wantonly broken it; he will be severely punished who has caused his brethren to break it against their will. Blessed is he who longs for the day when, from the rising to the setting of the sun, and from pole to pole, there shall be one Church Catholic and Apostolic, Holy and Undivided. Blessed is

he who labours by speech or deed to remove offences from between brethren, to bring together those who have been long separated, to widen the bonds of fellowship in Christ; blessed the man who shall see the day when the walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt, and the Church of God be as a city that is compact together, 'whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.' Until that day come, let us pray for the peace of Christendom, and let every one prosper who loveth the Church of Christ.

THE HOLY MINISTRY

XII

THE HOLY MINISTRY

It may be boldly said that there is no office in human society so sacred as that of the Christian Ministry, no man on whom lies so heavy a burden as the minister of Christ. If he is to be worthy of his name, and fulfil the conditions of apostolic days, he must have been called twice by the Spirit of God—once to personal faith, once to public service—and without both calls he ought not to enter on this high duty. He also receives a double portion of grace—so much that he may overcome his own sin, and keep the law in his own life, so much that he may help his fellow-men in their spiritual conflict and win the world to his Master. It is necessary for him not only to feed upon the Word of God for his own spiritual life, but also so to understand it that he may be able to feed the souls of other men. Unto him is given the commission of Christ's

Evangel, that he may declare the mercy of God; and the vindication of Christ's law, that he may beat down unrighteousness; and the charge of Christ's people, that he may keep them in the way everlasting. Upon him in especial depends the spiritual prosperity of the Church; for if he be holy and zealous, then the Church triumphs; if he be unbelieving and worldly, then the Church languishes. When the Ministry becomes careless, it is a sign that God is punishing the Church. As often as He would bless the Church, he revives the Ministry. When the Ministry is self-denying in life and spiritual in aim, then the world is vastly impressed, because it is reminded of Christ Himself; when the tone of the Ministry is frivolous and material, then the world is secretly disappointed. Whether or not the Ministry is invested with supernatural power, and whether or not the minister is intended to be separate from the people, and to follow a habit of life to which other Christians are not called, are matters of dispute; but this is certain, that next to the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments, he is the chief channel through which grace comes from Christ

to His people, and to the outside world he stands as the representative of the Church and the type of Christian living. It therefore concerns every Christian to understand the nature and the functions of that Ministry which Christ established in the Church, and by which He supports His Body.

As has happened with other doctrines in dispute, such as that of the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ, the difference is not so much about the facts of the Ministry as about the theory. If any one should ask how many officers there were in the Ministry at the close of the apostolic period, and what were their duties, and how they were appointed, and how they were related one to another, there is not much difficulty in getting an answer, and there would not be much disagreement about the answer. We are dealing up to that point with historical facts which are distinctly stated in the apostolic writings. When we inquire into the relation between the Ministry and the Lord, and between the Ministry and the Church, into the inherent power conferred upon the Ministry, and the authority to transmit this power to the generation following, into the

question whether the Ministry is a priesthood in any sense different from that in which all Christ's people are priests, or whether Christ's minister is not the pastor of human souls to whom Christ alone is Priest, then we pass into an atmosphere which is thick with controversy and charged with keen feeling. With many shades of difference between, there are two opposite theories which divide the Church, and whose conflict has been one of the calamities of Christendom. One maintains that the true minister of Christ must be ordained by a particular officer of the Church, who alone can convey the grace of the Ministry and confer power to administer the Sacraments; that the minister so ordained is a priest with authority, to offer again, in some sense, the sacrifice of the Lord, changing the bread and wine, after some fashion, into the Body and Blood of the Lord; that he has power to remit or to bind sins; that through him the Christian approaches his Lord, and that the Christian cannot, without peril, pass by this minister and seek direct access to Christ. It is also held that the grace conferred upon this man at ordination is indelible, and that his

power to administer Sacraments and to loose sins is not affected by his character and conduct. According to the other theory, the valid minister of Christ is one on whom has been conferred a special gift of grace for the holy Ministry, and who, in virtue of this gift already bestowed, is outwardly called to the public work of the Ministry by the people of Christ, as he has already been inwardly called by the Lord; that he should be publicly set apart for the Ministry by the laying on of hands; that this is not the act of one man, but of the whole Church; that he is the teacher, and the guide, and the servant, and the friend of the people, but not their governor; and that if he fall into sin and become a scandal in the Church, he must at once be removed from the Ministry, because he has fallen from its grace, and that through an unbelieving and unholy man we cannot ordinarily expect any blessing to come. It may be said that this controversy cannot be of any great importance, since it only concerns the theory of the Ministry; but as a matter of fact the conditions of salvation, the relation of the soul to our Lord, the efficacy of the means of grace, and the very

experiences of the religious life, are profoundly affected by the question whether Christ's minister is a priest or a pastor.

According to the apostolic writings—to deal first with facts about which there can be very little difference of opinion—there were six officers in the first age of the Church, that is, between Pentecost, when the Church may be said to have been fully established, and the death of the last of the Apostles, who were its inspired and authoritative rulers. The highest officer was the Apostle, as St. Paul declares when he gives the Ministry in order of rank: 'And God hath set some in the Church; first apostles.' The word Apostle has a distinct and most honourable meaning, for it signifies one sent by Christ, even as He was sent by the Father, except that while the Lord received from His Father the great commission of salvation, the Apostles received from Christ the commission to proclaim that salvation. The word is however employed both in a narrower and a larger sense. Within the Gospels it is applied to the Twelve whom Christ called from among His disciples and appointed to be the missionaries of the world; and accord-

ing to St. Luke, Christ gave this name to the Twelve. 'He chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.' The number was fixed by that of the tribes of Israel, and, it was felt, must be maintained; so that when Judas Iscariot fell from his place Matthias was appointed his successor. The Apostles were called 'The Twelve,' and it was their reward that they should sit in the kingdom of heaven upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel; and it is written in the Revelation of St. John that the wall of the city, which is the heavenly Jerusalem and the figure of the Church triumphant, 'had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.' According to the idea of Pentecostal days, the qualification for an Apostle is that he should have had such intercourse with Christ that he could be a witness of the resurrection; and St. Paul, in claiming to be an Apostle, puts forth as the first evidence, 'Have not I seen the Lord?' and again, 'He was seen of me also as of one born out of due time.' It is also implied as a second condition that he should have received his commission direct from Christ, so that after the disciples had selected two who

fulfilled the former condition that they had seen the Lord after His resurrection, they left the decisive choice, as they believed, to the Lord, through the casting of the lots, and St. Paul insists that he received his commission from Christ Himself, and is very jealous indeed lest it should be supposed he had been called by the other Apostles. He is an addition to the Apostolate, and was called for a special work, and with him the number of the Apostles is complete. The Twelve, with St. Paul, last called but most widely sent, are the glorious company of the Apostles.

As might be expected from the word, it is also applied to persons who were outside this circle, and indeed were not qualified to enter it, but who were distinguished servants of Christ, and were called to the larger ministry. When St. Paul is writing about the evidence for the resurrection, he declares that Christ appeared not only to Cephas and the Twelve, but also that He was seen of all the Apostles. In the Book of Acts, Barnabas, as well as Paul, is called an Apostle; and in the Epistle to the Philippians, Epaphroditus is described as 'your messenger,' or Apostle;

while in the Epistle to the Romans, Andronicus and Junias are said to have been of note among the Apostles. James the Lord's brother, Silvanus, Titus, and many nameless persons have their place in the larger Apostolate. Distinguished divines are inclined to make no difference in kind between the thirteen and the general Apostolate, and it is quite possible that many of its members may have seen the Lord. It is another question whether they received the call direct from a risen Christ, which was given to St. Paul from an open heaven, and it seems safer to conclude that while there were more men entitled to be called Apostles than we had thought of, or whose names are even mentioned in the sacred writings, the thirteen occupied a solitary place.

The work of an Apostle was not to administer Sacraments, but to preach the gospel; not to preside over Churches, but to found them; not to shepherd the souls of Christ's people, but to evangelise the world. He was the missionary of the Cross, who came to a city to preach Christ, who received into the Church the first converts, who gave them the body of Christian truth, who appointed their

first ministers, who visited the Churches to see how it fared with them, and who advised and directed in cases of difficulty. For him there were no bounds of work except that he must not intrude upon another Apostle's labours; for him there were no limits of duty except that he must chiefly preach the gospel. His province was the Empire, his charge all the Churches. The Apostolate ceased of necessity when the last Christian died who had seen the Lord, and can only be restored if Christ were pleased again to reveal Himself from heaven, as He did to St. Paul; and until He so calls one of His servants no one has any right, in the stricter sense of the word, to call himself an Apostle.

The second officer of the Apostolic Church is the Prophet; and the only difference between the Prophet of the New Testament Church and the Old is that the New Testament Prophet does not seem to have committed his revelations to writing, and also that he was overshadowed by the Apostles. Like the Prophet of the former day, he is one whose soul is especially open to the influence of God's Spirit, and through whom,

as through a sensitive medium, the will of God can be declared. There are men in every age who have quicker ears for truth than their fellows, no doubt because they have finer souls, and the mystics are, in measure, the order of prophets continued in the Christian Church. The Prophet of the Apostolic period was possible, then, because there was at that time a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit. 'On My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit, and they shall prophesy.' When this period ceased, the order also ceased, and cannot be restored until the same baptism of the Holy Ghost be again given, of which the signs will doubtless be the spiritual gifts of Apostolic days. Among the spiritual gifts St. Paul ranked prophecy very high: 'Desire spiritual gifts,' he wrote, 'but chiefly that ye may prophesy; for he that prophesieth, speaketh unto men, to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.'

The third order which follows upon that of Prophet is Teacher; and although the exact duties and sphere of the Teacher in the Early Church are obscure, one may safely conclude that he represented our scholar, or theologian.

It was for him, we suggest, to follow up the work of the Apostle who declared the facts of Christ's life and the conditions of Christ's salvation, and to reinforce the Prophet who quickened and comforted the hearts of Christians by his spiritual and heavenly exhortation. The Teacher would arrange the facts and apply the revelation, and reduce this body of truth to an orderly and convenient form, so that the people might carry it in their minds the more easily. It would also fall to him to remove the difficulties which met new converts in the gospel, and to defend the gospel from attack. While the Apostle and the Prophet, in the special sense of the words, ceased with the first century, the Teacher is a permanent officer of the Church, to whom the Church has owed more than she has ever acknowledged, and whom the Church has often been ready to persecute. As in the first days, he has no parish and no congregation, but lives where he pleases, and goes where he wills; and the scholar of Christ is the servant of all Christ's people, but chiefly of his fellow-ministers; and when we consider what the Church has owed to those men—Augustine, Aquinas, Calvin, Hooker—we know she can have

no greater gift until there be once more among us Apostles and Prophets.

The fourth officer in the Church—still proceeding in order of rank—is the Evangelist, and in the list given in the Epistle to the Ephesians he is placed third. Christ, St. Paul writes, gave 'some Apostles, some Prophets, and some Evangelists'; and there are two illustrations of the Evangelist given in the Apostolic period. One is Timothy, who seems to have been sent by the Apostles as an Apostolic delegate, appointing Church officers, and administering discipline, as well as declaring and maintaining the truth. The other is Philip, who happens to be one of the seven, but who was also an Evangelist, and as an Evangelist held a higher place than that of deacon. It was he who at the bidding of an Angel met the Ethiopian treasurer returning from Jerusalem in despair of truth, and taught him the way of God; and it was he who preached Christ to the city of Samaria. He, also, was the delegate of the Apostles; and when it was known at Jerusalem that Samaria had received the word of God, Peter and John went down and laid their hands upon the converts, and they received the

Holy Ghost. Philip at least had the power of working miracles, and it may be taken for granted that the Evangelists exercised special gifts, both of power and authority, through their connection with the Apostles. Such gifts are not continued, but the office is one which may well be permanent in the Christian Church. If God has bestowed upon any one of His ministers the distinct gift of preaching the gospel to unbelievers and winning the outside world to Christ, a gift which is different from that of exposition and edification, then it seems wise that such a man should be set aside for this office, and that he should receive a commission to go wherever the door opens, and to gather Christ's lost sheep into the fold. The missioner is as much needed at home as the missionary is abroad, and the organisation of the Christian Church will not be complete until the order of Evangelists be restored—and here we mean the Evangelist of the type of Philip. Unto other men has been given the faculty of oversight, including arrangement and management, and it would be an excellent thing for the non-episcopal Churches to have officers who

would set in order troubled affairs, examine into duty neglected by ministers and congregation, strengthen the weak parts in the Church's machinery, and by counsel and encouragement put heart into those who are losing hope. The Scots Church, which has never had any leaning to prelacy, found it useful after the Reformation to have an officer, called the superintendent, who exercised the practical, though not spiritual, powers of a bishop. This is the Evangelist after the type of Timothy.

Besides those four officers, two of whom are confined of necessity to the Apostolic period, and two may very well be permanent in the Christian Church, we find two other officers who before the close of the first century have an established position, and who remain unto this day. The chief distinction between them and the other four is that while the four belong to the Church universal, going whither they may be sent, and having as it were no parish, except the world, the fifth and sixth officers are localised and have their sphere in one congregation. One is that minister of Christ who is called sometimes an elder or presbyter, and sometimes an episcopus

or bishop; and fortunately the controversy regarding the identity in rank and office of the elder and bishop in Apostolic days has been settled by the greatest English theologian of our century, and no one now questions the fact that presbyter and episcopus are to all intents and purposes synonymous. The words have, however, different origins and bear witness to the two streams which flowed into the Christian community. Episcopus was the name given to one of the chief officers in the innumerable associations for social, religious, and political purposes which existed throughout the Roman Empire during the early centuries of Christian history. The Church was not the first society to which the Christian convert had belonged, for he may have been a member of a trades' union, or an athletic club, or a literary association, or a financial company. Society at that day was subdivided into guilds and clubs, and the Christian Church, although, as we have pointed out, something very different, would seem at first sight only another association more kindly, and more spiritual than its neighbours. When the Christians in any place had been formed into

a local Church, and when an officer was required to receive the offerings of the Church and to distribute them among the poor, to show kindness to travelling Christians, and to exercise discipline among the members of the society, to be, in short, the president of this new body, what could be more natural than that he should be called the episcopus? and therefore, when St. Paul is writing to the Philippian Church, a Church that was chiefly Gentile, he addresses not the elders, but the bishops.

Among the Jews from early days society had been based upon the family, and the rulers of the people were the elders. The elders played no little part in Old Testament history; and when the synagogue was instituted, they became its chiefs, sitting in the place of honour and representing authority in the community. The Christian Church was born within Judaism; and when it set up house for itself, the Church adopted the Jewish system of government by elders. The office was not so much created as continued, and we find the elders ruling the Church of Jerusalem, which, of course, was Jewish, just as the same men might have ruled

in the synagogue. While St. Paul does not mention the presbyters in his roll of Church officers, very likely for the reason that they were local and not universal in their office, he takes care to ordain elders to take charge of Churches which he founded. He laid upon the elders of the Church the charge of the flock over which 'the Holy Ghost had made them episcopi.' It is the elder who is to feed the sheep, and it is for the elder the sick are to send. The elders are honourably united with the Apostles and the government of the Church of Jerusalem, and the decree of the first Church council ran in the name of the Apostles and elders. While in the earlier days the offerings of charity from the Gentiles to the Jews were forwarded to the elders for distribution at Jerusalem, and while the episcopus would be mainly occupied with charity in the beginning of his Christian career, this officer soon threw off the charge of financial affairs and was devoted to the spiritual oversight of the people, and the elder or bishop of Apostolic days corresponds almost exactly to the minister or clergyman in charge of a parish and congregation.

Very soon, and from the force of circumstances,

it was necessary that a Christian congregation should have two officers, one to attend to its spiritual affairs, and another to its temporal, and before the conversion of St. Paul the Church of Jerusalem had made this division of labour. They had selected seven men full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and having ordained them, and so declared them to be spiritual officers of Christ's Church, they committed to their charge the offerings of Christ's people. It is true that the seven were not called deacons; but things exist before their names, and there is no doubt they were the beginning of the diaconate, the order next to that of the elder, and which completes the organisation of the Church in Apostolic days. It is not safe to take the seven as the type of deacons, for two of them, Stephen and Philip, were preachers and witnesses, and the position of the seven seems to have been at least equal to that of presbyters; but the work which they were called to do is that which afterwards belonged to the deacon. From the qualifications for the two offices, as stated in the first Epistle to Timothy, it is evident that the duty of the presbyter 'was more spiritual,' for he must be a

man apt to teach, while the deacon is to be one 'not double-tongued and not greedy of base gain,' a stronger word than that used in the character of the elder. While the deacon gradually became the assistant of the presbyter in spiritual duties, he was, to begin with, the almoner of the Church. We are reminded both of the unity and humility of Christian service by his very name, which is simply servant, and is the name by which an Apostle is proud to describe himself; for from the Apostle to the deacon, and from the deacon to the most obscure person who works in Christ's house, all are the servants of the Lord.

When we pass from the facts of the holy Ministry in the Apostolic period to the authority of the Ministry in all periods, then we are among burning questions which have set men's minds on fire, and in the flames thereof charity itself has often been consumed. It is perhaps an inevitable fault of human nature that men should be jealous about their office, and that ministers of Christ holding different theories of their authority should allow the personal factor to enter into the discussion of Orders. As the word for Orders, and all the words which have to do with

appointment to Christian offices, came from the province of civil government, possibly some flavour of secular ambition and strife has clung to them, and the Church, in adopting the graded system of political government, has run some danger of turning the Kingdom of Christ into a worldly state. It was not without reason that the Master insisted upon the grace of humility, and rebuked Apostles who desired to exceed their fellows in anything except in sacrifice, and that He declares that He alone was Master and that His servants were brethren. Perhaps one may be too much influenced by the appearance of things, but certainly one cannot compare the hierarchy of the Church when the Church was in the height of her worldly glory—the titles and the pomp and the riches and the luxury, I will not add the unashamed vices—with the simplicity of the Ministry in the days of the Apostles, without amazement and the uneasy feeling that all this rank and show is of the world, and not of Christ.

The dispute regarding the exact authority of the holy Ministry is really twofold. First, what it is; and second, whence it came; and although

the two questions are closely linked together—the question, that is, of sacerdotalism and the other question of Apostolic succession, to use the familiar terms of this controversy—it is convenient to take first the one and then the other. Was it according to the will of Christ (and is it a matter of fact) that the Christian minister be a priest, or was it not Christ's intention (and the state of things in Apostolic days) that he should be a pastor? If the matter can be settled by names, then the argument can be closed at once; for although the minister of Christ is called, as we have seen, Apostle, Prophet, Teacher, Evangelist, Elder, Overseer, Deacon, as well as Shepherd, Leader, Ruler, he is never, as an officer of the Church, called Priest in the New Testament Scripture. Amid this wealth of description, designed to bring out every side of his office and the distinction between the various duties of the Ministry, one word is carefully omitted and ostentatiously refused. It was the word most commonly used to describe a minister of religion in that day, and the word used not only in heathen religions, but also in the Jewish Church —the Church from whose bosom Christianity

sprang. If it should be said that it was necessary for Christianity to avoid the terminology of Judaism in order that the new religion might not be confounded with the old, then why was the local and permanent Minister of the Christian Church called an Elder, and the Synagogue, as it were, reconstituted in the upper rooms of the young Church? Was it to make a distinction between the Synagogue, wherein there was no sacrifice except that of praise, which is ever to be continued, and the Temple, where there were the sacrifices of blood, which had been for ever abolished? Is there not a presumption that Christianity began without any sacerdotal element, and is a religion in which sacerdotalism was to have no place, when the new religion, having a choice, called her minister, not a priest after the fashion of the Temple, but an elder after the example of the Synagogue?

Things, however, exist before words, and words are then made for their description; and it may be suggested that the office of ministering priest was implied in the Christian worship, although the name had not yet been given to the officiating minister. If there be no Sacerdotium in the

New Testament Scriptures, yet, if there be a Sacrificium, the other must follow, for a sacrifice demands a priest. Was there any sacrifice which the presbyter could offer, and in offering constitute himself a priest? Certainly there was a sacrifice which he was bound to offer, and that was the living sacrifice of himself as a man bought by the blood of Christ and consecrated to His service; but this was a sacrifice which all his fellow-Christians could not only offer with him, but were bound to offer, and in this sense all Christian folk are priests unto God. An atoning sacrifice there was none for him or any other man to offer, for Christ had offered Himself once in the end of the world, and now our one Ministering Priest has 'entered into the Holy Place to make intercession for us.' This sacrifice cannot be repeated, but it can be remembered, and in the remembrance of the Lord's death the whole congregation unite: 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?' There can therefore be no ministering priest because he has no sacrifice to minister, and the

word is not used because the thing does not exist.

It may also be added that the spirit of Christianity has no place for the sacerdotal idea, because that idea creates an order of men who stand between God and their fellows, and through whose ministrations the sinner can alone be accepted of God. Nowhere in the Gospels does Christ intimate that if a person desired to approach Him he must come through an Apostle. More than once He rebuked His Apostles because they came between Him and seeking souls. He was accessible to all and easy to be entreated; more accessible than His Apostles were, more gentle in His ways. There never was any religion so informal and so unofficial as Christianity, whose Lord invites all to come to Him, and declares He will cast none out who come, Who answered every prayer, and responded even to the tears of a penitent. Has Jesus, because He passed into the heavens, withdrawn Himself from human souls? has He given to inferior men that right of mediation which He sharply denied to the Apostles? Is He now remote and awful, refusing to hear any confes-

sion unless it be made first through a fellow-sinner, refusing forgiveness unless it be made through the mouth of that fellow-sinner? It may be so; but if so, the Lord is not that 'same Jesus.' It may be that a man now stands between the penitent and the Lord; but if so, there is a gulf which cannot be bridged between the Church of to-day and the Church of the first days.

Our second question is the origin of ministerial authority, and the question here is whether a Ministry is valid in virtue of the grace bestowed upon the minister which appears in his life and work, which also is recognised and accepted by the Church, or whether his Ministry is alone valid who has a commission received by transmission from the original pastoral authority. No doubt there is something which appeals to the imagination in the idea of this long and august succession. That the Apostles received a deposit of grace which they passed to bishops, that one bishop handed this sacred treasure to another, on to the present day; that every man on whose head a bishop in this succession laid his hands was invested with such supernatural power that the

child whom he christened in the name of the Holy Trinity became a child of God; and that every time he consecrated the elements of bread and wine they changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. This provision seems to give the most perfect security for the administration of the Divine grace, as, on the other hand, it separates with the utmost rigour between those who belong to the Church and those who are outside the covenant; and, indeed, so uncompromising and so automatic is the principle, that if both the officiating priest in the Sacrament and the receiving communicant be rank unbelievers, yet the one can give and the other receive the Body and Blood of Christ.

While on first sight this theory is imposing by its thoroughness, on closer examination it is encompassed with difficulties; and the first is this, that no such deposit of sacerdotal grace was ever made to the Apostles as Apostles, and therefore there was nothing which they could transmit to the bishops following. It is generally agreed that Christ conferred this authority, if He did at all, on the evening of Easter Day, when, the doors being shut, He appeared in the

midst of His disciples, and said, 'Peace be unto you.' He also breathed on them, and said, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost'; and then follow the special words of the commission, 'Whosesoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained.' What may be intended by the remitting and retaining of sins is just now outside our concern. What we require to know for our purpose is not the contents of the commission, but the persons to whom it was given. They are called in St. John's Gospel the 'disciples,' and in St. Luke's Gospel the company is described as the 'eleven and they that were with them'; that is to say, not the Apostles only, but Cleopas and his friend who had returned from Emmaus, and a number of other disciples. Christ conferred this power not upon one class, the Ministry in the Church, but upon the whole Church; not upon a few, but upon the society; so that it is the whole body of Christians which received this deposit, and the whole body who can transmit it to the generations following. Again, if you please, we have a priesthood, but it is the priesthood of the whole body, and no grace can be transmitted through

the line of apostolical succession which cannot be fully transmitted by the whole body of the Church.

The second weakness in this theory is the uncertainty of the method by which the grace can be transmitted. If it be by the laying on of hands, then this beautiful rite had a very wide use in ancient times, and was employed not only for the ordination of a minister but the admission of an ordinary member and the readmission of a penitent, and the Pope declares that by itself the imposition of hands signifies nothing definite. If it is by the words which are used, then it is in dispute what the words ought to be, and there have been many different forms. When Cyprian describes the ordination of a bishop with great minuteness, he does not refer to the imposition of hands. According to Dr. Hatch, 'all the elements of appointment to ecclesiastical offices were also the elements of appointment to civil offices,' namely, 'Nomination, Election, Approval, and the Declaration of Election by a competent officer. . . .' On the morning after his election the bishop is escorted to his chair by the other bishops who took part in the election, and at

once enters on the active duty of a bishop by preaching a sermon and celebrating the Eucharist. One also gathers from the directions which St. Paul gave to Titus to appoint elders in each city that the election was the same as that of a Roman magistrate, for the word employed means to elect by popular vote. It is also worthy of note that St. Paul was called to the Apostleship by Christ Himself, and insisted that his orders were of Christ and not of man; and when he was ordained at Antioch in recognition of the grace he had received, he was ordained not by Apostles, nor yet by presbyters, but by the whole body of the Church. 'Then they,' that is, the Church, 'held a special fast and prayed, and laid their hands upon them, and gave them leave to depart.' When it was necessary to elect the seven, the Church was commanded by the Apostles to discover men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom; when the Church had elected the seven, as men who had the Holy Ghost, they were ordained. Timothy was ordained by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery and also by the ordination of the Apostles, but it is stated with marked emphasis

that a gift had come to him by prophecy. We gather, therefore, from the history of the Apostolic period and early days that the great qualification for the ministers was the possession of the Holy Ghost; that the Church selected for office men that were so qualified, whether a Paul, or a Stephen, or a Timothy; that they appointed them to office as a rule by the laying on of hands, and that the validity of the office was not dependent on the form of ordination, about which to this day there is no certainty, but upon the spiritual gifts which the minister received from Christ. We therefore conclude not only that there is no special gift which the Apostolic officer can alone confer, but that if there were, there is no certain method by which he could transmit it.

Another unfortunate defect in this theory is the want of a continued and verified line of officers to transmit the grace, if it had been given, and if there were any way of transmitting it. When the deposit is so sacred and the want for it so great, and when, indeed, without an unbroken line of trustees there can be no ministerial or sacramental grace in the Church, one

could have hoped that the history of this line, upon which so much depends, would have been as distinct as the conditions of salvation. One would have expected to find a table by which the bishop of to-day could trace his descent from the Apostles—an unbroken chain with every link in its place. But what does a perplexed seeker after truth find when he turns to this genealogy? That an Anglican bishop traces his succession to the Roman Church, and the Roman Church informs us promptly and with emphasis that he is simply an unordained and unconsecrated layman; that a bishop of the Holy Orthodox Church of the East has true Orders by the admission of the Roman See, but yet the Eastern and Western Churches are separate; that the Roman Church cannot by the widest stretch of historical charity connect itself by a continuous line of bishops with the Apostles; that there is a blank space between the Apostles and the first historical Bishop of Rome; that there is a grave uncertainty when the historical episcopate was created; that there is no evidence of the ordination of a bishop by the Apostles; that the identification of the Evangelist Timothy and James of

Jerusalem with bishops is only a plausible suggestion; that the early episcopate differed very much, as a matter of fact, and by general consent, from the episcopate in later days; that some of the early Churches, whose position in the Church Catholic cannot be denied, had, so far as appears, no bishops, and that the bishop was elected by the presbyters—to quote the words of St. Jerome, 'Just as an army elects a general, or as deacons appoint one of themselves whom they know to be diligent and call him an archdeacon.' Amid this wilderness of uncertainty and controversy and speculation and inconsistence, the path of the succession can often be traced with difficulty, and is sometimes lost, and it is surely too great a burden upon reason to insist that a Christian must believe that along this wandering and broken way can alone come the sure blessing of the Divine grace. For this is not like the glory of the highway of the Prophet, wherein the wayfaring man, even though he be a fool, shall not err.

While one is bound to point out the patent difficulty of this theory, it does not follow that he is indifferent to the value of the episcopate

or the service which the bishop had rendered to the unity of the Christian Church. Although the episcopate may not be found during the Apostolic period, and although it may not have been created by inspired authority, of which, I submit, there is no evidence, there were excellent reasons for its establishment. For one thing, every body of officers, from the Board of a Company up to the rulers in Christ's Church, must have a president, and it is not desirable that he be too frequently changed. If he be a wise man, and able to rule with knowledge and with grace, it is better that he be continued in his office, and that the Church in that particular place should have a strong head. When persecutions came and some one was needed to hearten the Church, it was natural that a man of courage and faith should come to the front, and that the power should be concentrated in his hands. When heresies sprang up, and there was danger that the truth of God should be lost, it was well that it should have a responsible guardian. As the number of presbyters increased and the duties of the office multiplied, it was desirable that there should be

an overseer to take charge of them as they took charge of the people. The organisation of the Church, as the witness to the Lord and the defender of the faith, and the shepherd of souls, culminated in the office of bishop. Without the episcopate in the days of persecution and confusion, when society was falling to pieces on every side, and the Church was the only hope of stability, it may be urged with great force that the visible unity of the Church could not have been preserved, and her disruption would have been a disaster of the first magnitude both to religion and to society. It ought also to be frankly admitted that it is a good thing for the Church to have men of recognised authority and wide experience, to whom her ministers can go for spiritual and practical advice, and who shall be in truth their father in God. It is an historical fact that the Churches under episcopal government have had a more profound conviction of the duty of unity, and have been less open to the storms of individualistic self-will, than the non-episcopal communions, and the way in which a handful of non-episcopal Christians, being thwarted in some scheme of their own

fancy, will threaten to break up the Church of their faith and baptism is to my mind one of the strongest arguments for some form of episcopal government.

Whether government by presbyters or by bishops be more expedient for the good of a Christian Church, is an open question, and very likely a compromise between the two systems would be best; but it is another question altogether, whether it is the will of Christ that the supreme government of the Church should be so invested in bishops that any other system of government be judged an act of disobedience to the Lord, and the persons under its charge be placed outside the promised blessing. This is a daring position to take up in face of a divided Christendom, and there can be no other final settlement of the matter in dispute than an appeal to the facts of religion. It is really futile since the Reformation for any single Church to claim the monopoly of the grace of orders or of the sacraments. Does the Church of Rome, which upon the theory of Apostolic succession has the surest Orders, foster a piety more intelligent and spiritual than the Church of England?

Have the Wesleyan Methodists of England and the Calvinistic Methodists of Wales done less for religion according to their province than the Anglican Church? Has the Kirk of Scotland been less faithful to her nation or made less of her children than the ancient Church to whose heritage she succeeded? Has the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper been less efficacious for comfort and holy living when administered by a presbyter, ordained by fellow-presbyters, than by a priest on whom a bishop in full communion with Rome has laid his hands? When one asks these questions, and many more of the same kind might be asked, he is not to be understood as disparaging any body of Christ's people, for he rejoices to recognise the grace of God in all schools and in all sections of the Church—in St. Augustine and in Clement of Alexandria, in Tauler and in Thomas à Kempis, in Philip Melanchthon and in Francis Xavier, in Bishop Andrews and John Bunyan, in Pusey and in Spurgeon—nor is he seeking to unchurch any of Christ's disciples, or to limit the grace of the Lord, but he is rather trying to magnify that idea of the Church Catholic which includes

within its visible bounds every true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that Apostolic idea of the holy Ministry, as old as St. Paul's ordination at Antioch, which recognises as a valid minister of Christ every one who, having been called of God, and manifestly prepared by the Holy Spirit, shall therefore be called of Christ's people and ordained by them to the preaching of the word and the administration of the Sacraments.

THE SACRAMENTS

XIII

THE SACRAMENTS

It was a great theologian who defined a Sacrament to be the Visible Form of an Invisible Grace, and this definition is the more felicitious because it not only describes with accuracy certain ordinances of Christ, but also allies them to what may be called the Sacramental Law of Nature. It has been an unfortunate disability of human thought to distinguish so sharply between what is seen and what is unseen, as to place the supernatural in contrast to the natural, and to deny the unity of the universe. It was part of the Divine wisdom of our Lord to ignore this distinction in His teaching and ever to treat nature as the body in which the spiritual was incarnate, and as the parable which was its revelation. What we saw and handled corresponded with what we thought and felt, so that the spiritual, which had appealed to our

mind, became real to our senses, and as one commits to printed words upon a page what he has imagined, so we were to recognise in the phenomena of nature the shapes of the mysteries of grace. Christ did not compare the spiritual to the natural, but He was accustomed to identify them, so that the sign became the thing signified. He was the true vine whose sap was to be the principle of fertility in human souls; He was the light which would illuminate every human mind; He was the bread which would support the life of the soul; He was the water which would satisfy its thirst; He was the seed of indestructible vigour which might be cast into the ground but would spring up to future harvest. As He moved through nature it became the transparent veil, through which the spiritual will ever shine—a vast and Divine Sacrament.

Although we have not the vision of our Master, and impressions from the outside are apt to fall on us like snow upon a blind man's face, yet we are not quite indifferent to the spiritual effects of the world into which we have been born, and which laps us round on every side.

Our emotions correspond to the fresh beauty of sunrise, the golden glory of sunset, the awful majesty of a thunderstorm, the austere purity of the everlasting snow, the helpless loneliness of mid-ocean, and the joyful hope of the spring. The emotion may be too delicate for any than a poet's speech, yet for even commonplace people it is real, and they have the sensation of seeing their subtlest feelings cast into the most magnificent form, and also being moved through their senses to thoughts which never otherwise would have visited their minds. No word of preacher or of book would have so suddenly and thoroughly affected them, and the effect with successive impacts becomes a part of themselves. If it seems strange that souls should be fed by the Sacrament of the Bread and Wine, because the soul is spiritual and the elements are physical, it is quite as strange but it is perfectly true that the character of a people is largely shaped by the scenes amid which they live, so that an Italian peasant is the most volatile and gayest-hearted of men beside the blue Mediterranean, and the Highland Celt is the most sombre and reverential living at the base of hills on which the

mists are hanging. So the physical is again the instrument of the spiritual and men's souls are shaped by the Word which dwells within nature.

We carry about with us in our very constitutions as human beings an evidence for the sacramental principle, for we have not only the Eternal particle of the soul, but also the habitation of the body. It is not possible to imagine any human being as a disembodied spirit, and it is not likely there could be such a state of existence. We cannot be utterly unclothed; if one body be removed another must take its place, but it were less than the truth to think of the body as a mere vesture which can be put off and on like a cloak, for the body and the soul are so vitally connected that the soul may be said to penetrate and vitalise the body—to be the spring of its life and vigour. Through the body the sensations of the outer world pass into the soul, and through the same body the soul expresses itself and exercises its power. While the humility of the body veils the glory of the soul, as the elements in the Sacrament are a poor dwelling-place for the Lord, yet the soul is able so to transform the body that by and by we

catch the light within through the dim windows, and a man's face becomes the revelation of his character. As the Word comes to the elements and behold a Sacrament, so the soul comes to the body and behold a man.

The crowning illustration of this truth is found in the Incarnation of our Lord wherein deity has been united to humanity in a mystery. What an unbelieving Jew beheld was a peasant of Galilee, of lowly appearance and humble dress, who had no home and no honour, who was despised and rejected of men. What St. John and the Apostles saw was the Son of God, almighty, all-wise, all-loving, the very image of the Eternal Father. And the Deity and the Humanity are so united that they cannot be separated, so that whatsoever the Lord doeth as man, He doeth also as God. Through His Humanity streamed the efficacy of His Deity, and it was enough to touch the hem of His garment to be saved, and His Humanity is so entirely part of His personality that in the midst of the Throne St. John saw the Lamb as He once was slain. The Sacramental Law which is the revelation of the unseen by the seen, and of

grace by nature, which had been exhibited first in the creation of the world, next in the nature of man, came to its height in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose Humanity was as the Bread and Wine and Whose Deity is as the indwelling and Eternal virtue.

During the Dispensation of the Old Testament the Church was constantly educated and supported by Sacraments which at first were numerous and general, and then became limited and definite. The rainbow upon the cloud assured the ancient world that God would not again cover it with a deluge; the gift of Isaac to Abraham in his old age was the pledge of God's faithfulness; the burning bush in the wilderness declared the presence of God to Moses, a common bush, yet afire with God; a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day leading the children of Israel were the signs of the Divine guidance. Aaron's rod which blossomed, and the dew on Gideon's fleece, and the light which shone from the breastplate of the High Priest, and the Ark of the Covenant, were all Sacraments, assuring God's people of His presence and unfailing grace. There were, however, two rites of the ancient

Church which chiefly deserve to be called Sacraments and which were indeed a forerunner of the two Sacraments of the New Dispensation. One was Circumcision, wherein by a sign in his very flesh a child was admitted into the Church of God, and pledged to holiness; and the other was the sacrifice and feast of the Passover, wherein the Hebrew people were not only reminded of the mighty deliverances of God when He brought their fathers out of Egypt but were also fed and strengthened for the battle of life. The one was the Sacrament of union, whereby the soul was brought into convenant with God, and made a member of the nation which may be said to have been in type and prophecy the Body of the Lord; the other was the Sacrament whereby the fellowship between God and the nation was maintained.

While the Lord by His teaching and spirit did not confirm but abolished the sacrificial system of the ancient Church, and while He insisted that the Kingdom of God was within a man and that what the Father desired were worshippers in spirit and in truth, yet He in Whom two natures met, and Who is Himself the point of unity in

the universe of God, was not indifferent to the necessity and service of Sacraments. It was a great demand which He made on faith and it was needful to sustain it by outward signs, so that the senses should become the reinforcement of the soul, and a man should be better able to believe in the Grace of God when he saw it presented without Him in a symbol. For this end He commanded two rites which are altogether perfect in the selection of the visible means and in the suggestion of the invisible grace. If any one should hear Christ's words and believe in the Lord so that he was willing to be His disciple and to carry His Cross, then let him be baptized in water to signify that his sin had been cleansed away and that he had become a new creature, that his old man had disappeared as if he had died and that he had been buried in baptism with Christ. Let him come up from this baptism with a new name and enter on a new life, and by his baptismal vows let him be consecrated for ever to the Lord. Without doubt the perfect idea of baptism is realised when one who has come to the years of discretion makes his profession of faith in the Lord, knowing what he has

done and having counted the cost, and then is immersed in the waters of baptism. But the same picture of spiritual things is still retained, although the water be only sprinkled on the face and although the recipient of the rite be an infant whose parents place it with prayer and vows within the Church of God, as mothers placed their children in the arms of the Lord Jesus. The purest thing in nature, cold water, is used to represent and to convey the cleansing grace of Christ's Blood and Spirit. And by a speaking symbol the soul is made a member of the Holy Body of Christ.

As the disciple of the Lord will be dependent upon Divine grace from day to day, requiring forgiveness as often as he sins, and strength as often as he is weak, he must live in constant fellowship with the Lord, receiving grace for grace till he come to perfection in Christ Jesus. As he accomplishes his great pilgrimage he requires to be inwardly refreshed and comforted, and therefore Christ not only makes him to pass through the waters of the Red Sea wherein he is separated from Egypt for ever, and becomes God's free man, but He also

spreads for him a table in the wilderness so that he may eat and drink and go on his way rejoicing till he come to the land of promise. And to symbolise this constant communion with Himself, Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Bread and Wine. By Bread, which is the richness of the harvest and the staff of life, is signified that Body of the Lord—His Divine and human fulness—which is the food of the soul; and by Wine, which is the very essence of the vine and the gathered vigour of creation, is represented that Blood of the Lord which was His life and which is poured out to be the salvation of the world. As one eats this Bread and drinks this Wine so can he and so ought he to receive the fulness of the Lord and the cleansing of His Blood. The power of God which permeates all creation cometh as it were to a height in these elements of Water and Bread and Wine, and through them sanctifies, and satisfies, and glorifies the soul.

If one takes a generous reading of our definition of a Sacrament, then no doubt there are not two, but many Sacraments, for all the sacred acts of life, and especially such as are symbols, may

be called Sacraments, from the meal in which we establish the covenant of hospitality, to the kiss with which we seal the covenant of love. Certainly it is not without reason that the act of Ordination by which the Minister of Jesus Christ is set apart for his sacred duties or the intimate union between a man and woman in marriage are called Sacraments, for indeed both are deep and holy mysteries, and the outward shapes of spiritual realities. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are set in a place by themselves because they were instituted by the Lord, and because they are an obligation upon all His disciples, so that if one desires to enter into the Church Visible, it must be through the laver of baptism, and if any one would give his soul the full benefits of the Divine Covenant, he will obtain the same most surely and readily through the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord.

While the sacramental principle — that the physical is the body of the spiritual—is accepted on all hands, the efficacy of the Sacraments—what is conveyed by them—is a matter of keen controversy. It is indeed one of the misfortunes

of faith that the two Sacraments which were intended by the Lord to unite Christian people together by uniting them to their Head have become a cause of separation, and the Font of Baptism and the Holy Table of Communion are changed into battlefields where blood has been shed, and hearts have been broken. Could there be a more bitter satire upon our religion than one Christian persecuting another, because he differed from him over the mystery of Holy Communion, and two disciples quarrelling unto death who owned the same Lord and were trying to keep His last commandment, because the one took the words of our Lord's ordinance in the letter and the other in the spirit? One may however remember for his consolation that honest folk do not carry their arguments to such lengths, and will not make their doctrines matters of life and death, unless they regard the matter in dispute to be of the last importance. Christians have surely counted the grace of God very precious when they were willing to die for the method of its communication, and they must have loved their Lord with all their heart, when they counted their life to be less than the form

of His ordinances. If Christians sinned against charity, it was not because they loved men less but because they loved the Lord more; and if they seemed to ignore reason, it was not because they had not used every power of thought but because they desired that every thought should be brought into obedience to the mind of Christ. It has been a long and fierce debate, which is not yet settled, and which carries great issues with it, but one may be allowed to hope, not that the fire should die out, and believers come to regard the Sacraments as a thing of no importance about which it were not worth while to differ, but rather that it should cease to smoke and turn into a pure clear flame of faith and love. And if the Sacrament of the Body and Blood has been the 'disputa' of the past, around it may yet gather, as in the Vatican Fresco, the saints of all ages and all schools, and the sign of the Lord's dying love unite men together on earth as it unites the redeemed in heaven.

It is pleasant also to remember how far the whole Church travels together in unity and holds the same doctrine regarding the Sacraments. Every Christian believes that the grace of which

the Sacraments are in some sense the channel, comes alone from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and that the grace dwells in Him as the Head of the Church and the Saviour of the race; that the Sacraments are intended to minister that grace to His people as they have need of it, afflicted by the corruption of human nature, contending daily with temptations, requiring strength for ordinary duty, and desiring to be changed into the likeness of the Lord; that the Sacraments can only convey this grace in full measure and without injury when the recipient is in spiritual fellowship with his Lord; that the Sacraments are an obligation laid upon the heart and conscience of Christian people, so that every branch of the Church (with the exception of a few mystics such as the Society of Friends, who faithfully keep in the spirit what they do not observe in the letter) is careful to observe Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Is it too much therefore to say that in the essence of Sacramental truth the Church of Christ through all her provinces has one mind, and that if we are agreed that in the Sacraments we are cleansed by the Blood and reinforced by the Body of Jesus Christ, it is of

secondary importance, what is the exact method of the conveyance, or the limits of the grace conveyed.

When we approach the actual efficacy of the Sacraments and inquire what practical value they have for the person who receives them, for the Church and also for the world, there is even here entire agreement up to a certain point, and more stress might be laid upon the truth wherein we agree, even though we must acknowledge the truth wherein we differ. The Sacraments we all hold are a picture of the Divine Grace, wherein we are taught by a sensible parable the love of God and the reality of Christ's Sacrifice. They are according to the express wish of Christ a memorial of Himself, wherein we are reminded of His faithfulness unto death, and His devotion to the flock committed to His charge. They are a prophecy that He Who came once to die for our sins will come again for our perfect salvation when the day shall break and the shadows flee away. They are an open confession of faith in Christ Who has died and risen again, and Who is now Lord at the right hand of God the Father. They are a bond of union between Christian

disciples, who, coming from many homes and being of many kinds, are welded into one at the Holy Table, and in eating the Lord's Body become themselves one Bread. And they are a declaration of the Gospel, preaching as they do unto all men the Sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, before whom Christ is set forth crucified.

As Christians behold the Sacraments, and especially as they receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, they are reminded after a very lively fashion of the whole truth of the Gospel and the love of their Lord, as well as of their own sin and shortcomings, and thereby they are moved to new faith and devotion, they are filled with new strength and hope. For this end it matters nothing whether they receive the Sacrament as the Mass at a Roman altar or take it as the Communion from the table of a Scots Kirk; both Roman and Scot are quickened unto holiness by the remembrance of 'Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us.'

Christians who hold that doctrine of the Sacrament, which incorrectly but conveniently goes by the name of Zwingli, for indeed this Swiss Reformer held a higher view, will not

grant that the Sacraments are any more than a beautiful and moving symbol; but those who belong to the school of Calvin are apt to consider this an inadequate and poverty-stricken statement of the truth. With the words before them wherein the Lord declares the Bread and Wine to be in some sense His Body and Blood, and the discourse at Capernaum wherein He insisted that His disciples must eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, Calvin and his followers have concluded that the Sacraments besides being most excellent and convincing signs of the Grace of Christ, are also a means whereby that Grace is conveyed directly and truly to the believer's soul. Any doctrine less than this would not be worthy of the Sacramental mysteries, and would not properly express the experience of the Church, for Christ surely went beyond a symbol in the words and acts of the Upper Room, and a symbol can never be to the soul what the Sacrament has been to believing communicants since the day Christ rose from the dead and went to the right hand of the Father. While Calvin and all with him deny the real presence in the Roman sense, they hold firmly a presence of

the Body and Blood of Christ in their spiritual substance, and experimental power, and to vindicate this position, both against those who deny that the Sacrament is anything more than a sign, and those who insist upon the physical and actual presence of the Body and Blood of Christ, I quote the statement of Calvin in his *Institutes*: 'We conclude that pure souls are fed by the flesh and blood of Christ, just as our corporal life is preserved by bread and wine. For the analogy of the signs would not hold, if our souls did not find their aliment in Christ, which, however, cannot be the case unless Christ truly coalesce into one with us, and support us through the use of His flesh and blood. It may seem incredible indeed that the flesh of Christ should reach us from such an immense local distance, so as to become our food. But we must remember how far the power of His Holy Spirit transcends all our senses, and what folly it must be even to think of reducing His immensity to our measure. Let faith then embrace what the understanding cannot grasp, namely, that the Spirit truly unites things which are totally separated. Now this sacred communication of His flesh and blood by

which Christ transfuses His life into us, just as if He penetrated our bones and marrow, He testifies and seals in the Holy Supper; not by the exhibition of a vain and empty sign, but by putting forth such an energy of His Spirit as fulfils what He promises.' And the same doctrine has been stated in the Scots Confession of 1560, which runs 'We confess that believers in the right use of the Lord's Supper thus eat the Body and drink the Blood of Jesus Christ, and we firmly believe that He dwells in them and they in Him, nay, that they thus become flesh of His flesh and bone of His bones. For as the eternal Deity gives life and immortality to the flesh of Christ, so also His flesh and blood, when eaten and drunk by us, confer on us the same prerogatives.' The excellence of this doctrine lies in its profound sense of the power which works through the Sacrament, and its success in reconciling the experience of the soul with the words of Jesus, while it lays no insuperable burden upon reason, nor exposes a spiritual ordinance of Christ to the charge of materialism. It is not the least recommendation of this view that it makes the efficacy of the Sacrament

depend upon the operation of the Holy Spirit. As Christ was born by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the union between the Deity and the Humanity is sustained by the same spirit, so it is by His quickening power that the Bread and Wine are, if we may so say, charged with the life of Christ's Body and Blood, and without the presence of the Holy Spirit Christ were not in the Sacrament, as without the same presence He would not be in the Church. As Christ is in the midst of the Church by His Spirit, so is He by the same Spirit in the elements of the Sacraments, whether the Water of Baptism or the Bread and Wine of the Lord's Supper. And as He cometh into any one's soul who opens the door in the preaching of the Word, or in private meditation, so in the Sacrament He openeth the door Himself and receiveth His disciples into His heart. It is true that we can receive nothing more in the Sacrament than we do in the Word, for what more can be given us and what more can we desire than Christ Himself? But it is also true that Christ cometh in the Sacraments, in a more intimate and satisfying fashion, sealing our faith and with a sensible sign taking posses-

sion of our soul. And the power by which He acts is the Holy Ghost.

This view is also commended by the fact that it makes the efficacy of the Sacraments depend not only on the presence of the Holy Ghost, but also on the faith of the communicant, so that the Spirit in the Sacrament meets the Spirit in the soul. As every blessing of the Gospel is dependent upon faith, and he only can receive anything from the Lord who believes upon Him, so it is incredible, and seems indeed profane, that one who is a stranger to the Lord and a hater of His Law should receive anything except condemnation in the Sacrament. Unto him who believeth the Water of Baptism is both the sign and seal of regeneration, but to him who believeth not it is only a reproach representing that Blood of Christ which is not cleansing him, that union to the Lord Whom he is refusing. Unto him who comes to the Lord's Table with a believing heart the Bread and Wine in the moments of their reception are the sign and seal of forgiveness and grace, but unto Judas they can only be the revelation of his sin and the means of his

judgment. Apart from the Holy Ghost quickening the material of the Sacrament till it be inhabited by the person of the Lord, and quickening the deadness of our souls till they be moved unto faith and love, there is no virtue in any Sacrament—they are vain and empty rites. Wherefore no less in the Lord's Supper than in Baptism should the Christian beseech the power of the Holy Ghost that whatsoever is signified be performed; that the infant presented unto the Lord may receive from Him there and then the blessing of everlasting life, and the communicant who in his infancy was made a member of the Lord's Body be fed amid his labours and his trials with the Bread of Life.

Amid the pressure and the tyranny of the things which are seen the Sacraments witness to the power of the spiritual world, and its final triumph. They remind us that whoso will save his life shall lose it, but that he who loseth his life for Christ's sake shall find it again; that Christ did not die in vain upon the Cross, but that by death He vanquished sin and this present world; that He is not dead, but is alive with a power which reaches through heaven and through

earth; that those who are united unto Him are lifted above the power of death and are members of an Eternal Body; and that, while this world with its pride and its riches, and its lust and its glitter, must pass away, he who has set his affection upon the highest things which are at God's right hand where Christ sitteth must remain, 'for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' And the two Sacraments will continue until the shadows pass into the substance, and this veil of physical things be removed, and the Lord to Whose Grace and Person they bear witness leadeth the Church which He has redeemed unto living fountains of water in the heavenly places, and they who through the lowly elements of Bread and Wine have eaten the very Flesh and drunk the very Blood of the Lord shall be called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

THE MERCY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT

XIV

THE MERCY OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT

WHEN the average Christian speculates about the future, his eyes turn from the right hand of the Throne where the sun is shining, to the left hand where the shadows are resting, and he is less concerned about the righteous who go into life eternal than about those who go away into everlasting punishment; and in this bias of thought he proves both the charity of his heart towards sinners, and the confidence of his faith about saints. He were surely not worthy to be called after Christ's name who should be willing that any person be condemned to endless misery, and he would be unworthy of the name of man who could think of his fellow-creatures in a hopeless hell without dismay. About the condition of the righteous, either in this world, or in that which is to come, there can be no doubt. If

a man lives godly in this present life, he may suffer loss and pain, but even now he is rewarded by the approval of his conscience and the respect of good men, which both are the voice of God. When he passes from this life into the unseen, it matters not where he lands or in what circumstances he be placed, he must be welcome, and he must be blessed through all the vast regions of the other world. There is no place in the moral universe of God where it shall not be well with the godly man; and if we turn away when he enters through the gates into the City, and withdraw our mind from his life, it is because he is following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and his joy is beyond imagination. We are not troubled about John, for he is with the Lord Whom he loved; but we are very much troubled, and it were a shame if we were not, about Judas Iscariot.

It is unfortunate that when we ask what is to become of the ungodly, we have been embarrassed by what may be called accretions upon the doctrine of punishment which have been very offensive and which are quite without authority. The Church has taught from her pulpits in

past ages that the impenitent sinner would be consumed, body and soul, in physical fire, and eloquent preachers enlarged for the highest ends upon the horrors of his fate; and so the Church by her servants made the salutary doctrine of punishment an offence to the reason, since it is evident that no body could endure such fire without being destroyed, and that no soul could be touched with such fire at all; and an offence against the conscience, since it implies that God would exercise His miraculous power to secure the torture of His creatures. When our Lord spoke of fire, it can hardly be seriously contended that He meant that literal fire whose filthy smoke polluted the valley of Hinnom, but it is not therefore to be inferred that the reality would be less than the figure. A fire of remorse in the soul will surely be more bitter to bear than the burning of the flesh, for the one touches our feelings at the quick, the other only at their dullest. One would rather thrust his hand into the flame than strike the person whom he loves, and Peter, on the night of the denial, would have welcomed a Roman sword in his heart if his flowing blood could have wiped out the words of his lips. The

brief agony of fire, cruel though it might be for the moment, would be to many a man a welcome escape from vain and lasting regrets.

It is also a slander against God to suggest that the punishment of the ungodly is an act of personal revenge on His part in which He takes some kind of satisfaction and delight. As if He were an Almighty and malignant despot, whom some poor creature of His hands had offended and injured by his sinning, and who now exacted a thousandfold from him for all the wrong which he had done to his Creator! As if God were a greater Moloch, casting men into a furnace as a sacrifice to His honour, instead of being the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, like a father, pitieth His children, and spared not His own Son for our salvation.

This doctrine has also been discredited by the once prevalent idea that a man's future would be decided by his creed, and that a human being might be consigned to unending suffering because he happened to be a Protestant and not a Roman, or a Unitarian and not a Trinitarian. No serious person will allow himself to belittle the value of correct thinking in matters of religion, or will

undervalue the connection between thought and action, but it were monstrous to suppose that an error in the process of reasoning on the most difficult and intricate of subjects—the mysteries of religion—should bring such a doom upon any man's head. We have really only one account of the last judgment, but it is sufficient because it came from the lips of Christ, and the distinction which Jesus makes between the sheep and the goats is that which we all make in the judgment of daily life—the distinction, not of creed, but of character. If any man be sent to hell, he will find himself there, not on account of what he believed or did not believe, but on account of what he was and what he did.

Perhaps it is even more exasperating when the problem of punishment is mixed up with the problem of the heathen, and it is assumed that the nations which have lain outside the line of Jewish and Christian revelation will suffer doubly at the hands of God; first, because they knew not Christ; and second, because knowing not Christ they could not believe in Him, and therefore must suffer everlasting death. Surely the Judge of all the earth will do right, and will

judge every man according to the light which he has had and the works which he has done. As a matter of fact the possibility of hell is a much more serious thing for a Christian who has lived in the fulness of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost than for a man who has never heard the name of Christ, and there are many who have sat in Christian churches and taken the Sacrament of the Lord's Death who might well wish, both here and hereafter, to change places with Socrates and Marcus Aurelius.

The punishment of sin in the world to come, as in this present world, when it is disentangled from external circumstances, is really an ethical question which must be settled so far as it can be settled by our moral reason, and the evidence may be gathered from four quarters. We ought to turn first of all to the principle of punishment and settle in our mind whether it is exhausted in the idea of reformation. Certainly a great and happy change has come over the national mind within the last century as to the best treatment of criminals. At the close of last century the death penalty, the last and most awful act of justice, was inflicted for the theft of a few

shillings, or the stealing of a sheep, and public executions were orgies of profanity and brutality; the lash was constantly in use, and prisoners were treated worse than the brutes to whose condition they were being reduced. Amid this coarseness and mercilessness it is significant that people had no difficulty in believing in an endless hell, for indeed law had been making a hell on this side of the grave. With the gradual growth of humanity, as the Georgian period was replaced by the Victorian, criminal punishment came under the influence of nobler ideas, and it was felt that its chief end ought not to be to make a man suffer for his sins, but rather to turn him from his sins, so that when he left prison he might not be more degraded than when he entered, but should rather be established in the habit of well-doing. It will, I think, be found that just as society treats her criminals she believes God will treat His, and that there has been a certain correspondence between what we consider the right kind of prison here and what we believe God will constitute as a prison hereafter. We may, indeed, assume that punishment can only be perfectly justified when it is arranged not to

destroy but to save; and the method is most perfect which either hinders men from sinning, or, if they be overcome by sin, so deals with them that henceforward they desire to live godly and make every effort thereto. And that system of punishment could hardly be counted successful which succeeded in making a sinner miserable, but had not done anything to deliver him from his sin. We ought, however, to ask ourselves whether we would be satisfied in our reason and conscience were retribution entirely eliminated from the idea of punishment, and whether we do not feel that it has its own just place. Suppose that some ruffian should deliberately and wantonly injure your child, would it be enough in your judgment that he be placed under a course of prison treatment simply that he be lifted in future above such evil deeds? Would not you demand that he be made to suffer, even as he has made that child to suffer; and would you consider yourself revengeful or inhuman in this demand? Would not you consider any system of justice wanting in grit, and less than satisfactory to the conscience, which did not make a wilful sinner smart for the injury

which he had done to innocent people, apart altogether from the question whether the smarting was to make him a better man? And the point is, if it be just that a man smart for what he has done in this life, would it be unjust that he smart in the life to come, especially if he escaped punishment in this present world? If there be a proper place for retribution in human justice, is it to be understood that there can be no place in Divine Justice?

Our second field of evidence is derived from the permanence of character. If we have learned to believe that a man's future is to be determined by character rather than by creed, then the laws of character have a great deal to say with regard to future punishment. And if we have also learned to believe that character creates a man's environment, so that goodness and badness each make its own place, then character may be the builder of hell. A natural recoil from the tyranny of dogma should not carry us the length of denying the facts of life, and a Christian dislike of human suffering should not lead us to ignore the distinction of right and wrong. If we do not know much about life beyond the grave,

we know a good deal of life on this side of the grave; and while we may have a sentiment of horror against hell in the next world, we must not shut our eyes to the fact of hell in this world; and if we discover that a man is capable of creating a place of horrible suffering in this life, we may not lay the blame of a place of suffering in the other world to the charge of God. Let us, at least, be real, and face the situation as we see it with our own eyes and without any need of an apocalypse. Here is a man who, through gross evil living and a savage temper, has made his home a veritable Gehenna to his innocent wife and children. He has become an unmitigated curse to them, not only in their bodies, but also in their souls. The only relief those miserables had, and the only opportunity of decent living, came when this husband and father was shut up in prison. This is not a singular case, nor is it a case confined to one class in society. When that man dies, it is a fortunate deliverance to his family, so that no one can pretend to regret his death, and many a philanthropic person had wished he had died sooner. What is going to be done with that man where he has gone? It

is all very well to say that no person may be tortured, and we do not now believe that God will torture any person; but it is well to remember that that man spent his life torturing helpless people, and it is fair to ask whether he is going to be allowed to torture some more innocent people on the other side of the grave. He is an ugly fact, and cannot be dissolved in a flood of sentiment. When his wife, after a few years' rest, obtained by his death, passes into the next world, is she to be thrust again into his company, and is he to be allowed to repeat his former performances? Surely the most sickly sentiment will not go that length. She used to have short periods of relief in this poorly governed world, when imperfect human justice kept the ruffian in jail; is she to be worse off with the perfect justice and supreme moral arrangements of the world to come? If one allow that that man is to be kept apart, so that he do no more mischief, and that no persons suffer hereafter as they have suffered here, then he has granted—more than that, has demanded—the existence of hell. For if that man be separated from well-living people, then he must be placed with evil-

living people, and you have arrangement by character—John and Mary and Paul together, Judas and Caiaphas and Nero together. Does any one seriously believe that a confirmed ruffian is going to live in a state, wherever it may be or whatever it may be, which was created to be the home of the Apostle John and the Apostle Paul, to be the home of Francis of Assisi and Thomas à Kempis, to be the home of his little child who had died in innocency, to be the home of all those clean-living people who glorified God in their day and generation, and who, having overcome the last enemy, are now with God? Are we going to launch into this Christian home that ruffian who was a curse to his wife, so that she was congratulated when he died; who was a terror to his children; who was a byword in society for the injury he had done; who had not in him one single ground on which, when they went to bury him, they could respect him? How does that bear on the question of future punishment? That man is somewhere. Is it not most natural to believe that he is with his friends of the same colour and complexion? Would the wildest sentiment propose

to thrust the saints among the sinners, or to intrude the sinners among saints? Would the sinners desire to be in heaven, and would they be happy in heaven? May it not be that one man's heaven is another man's hell? Whether that be so or not, a man's character inevitably settles his place.

It may, of course, be suggested that character will change and that it does not follow that an evil liver here will be an evil liver there, and that we are entitled to hope that no man's doom is settled by this short period of mortal life. This is not a hope which we desire to cherish about the saint, for we believe that his light will shine more and more to the perfect day, and that as he has begun so he will continue through all the ages; but if we can find any ground for our faith, we are certainly entitled to hope that the character of the sinner will be reversed. We must again, however, not be guided by our friendly wishes, but by our experience of life. There is a time in youth and early manhood when character is still fluid, and can be evidently changed. The power of love, or some high calling, or the influence of a friend, or some startling

event may profoundly affect the attitude of the mind and the trend of the affections and the goal of life. When we are young, we are most open to the appeals of the Evangel and the grace of God, to the example of godliness and the lessons of life. Before middle age the character has crystallised and settled into shape, and with every year of temptation unresisted and sins enjoyed the character hardens and becomes impervious. It is possible that a man of fifty may be converted and become as a little child; it is not likely. It is possible that a sinner dying may be so regenerated in the course of an hour that he pass as a saint in thought and character into the heavenly kingdom; it is a rare case. Our wisdom in estimating life is not to argue from its brilliant exceptions, but to abide by its rule; and there is no rule of life more patent and more solemn than the fixity of character. Our bodies change in every part, our circumstances dissolve around us, our fellowships are broken and our beliefs depart, but character remains and grows and solidifies and reigns. And when we think of the future in its weal or in its woe, we must reckon with character.

We are also entitled to seek for light on this awful question from the will of God as it is declared in Holy Scripture; and there was a day when pious Christians firmly believed that so many of our race would be consigned to hell by the Divine will. For if any one believes that one man is so predestinated unto life that he must attain thereto whatever he thinks, or does, or wills, then it follows that another man is practically predestinated to everlasting death whatever he thinks, or does, or wills. But there are few Christians to-day who could endure the thought that any one whom God has called into being by His providence, and for whom, as one of the world, He gave His Son, is destined without hope of escape to the place of darkness. This matter of the Divine will is not to be settled by a text here and a text there, but by the whole scope of revelation, from the days of the Patriarchs to the days of the Apostles; and the message of the Bible, when it is separated from local circumstances and imagery, is clear and full, and it comes to this, that it is the will of our Heavenly Father that not one of His creatures should perish. For their salvation He gave His

beloved Son, He sent the Holy Spirit, He compasses every man with the mercies of providence and with the invitations of grace; so that, if any one is saved, it is by the grace of God; and if any one is lost, it will be in spite of the grace of God. So far as the will of God is concerned, there would be no hell, but only heaven, just as there would be no sin and only holiness. The will of God has had as much to do with the creation of hell as with the origin of sin. It is a fact in the human constitution that God has given His creatures a certain measure of freewill, allowing him a space for himself wherein to breathe and move; it is a fact of our own experience that we have said yes or no to the appeals of the Divine grace. It does not follow, therefore, that if any one suffer eternally this must be by the will of God, nor does it follow that there will be no punishment because the will of God is our salvation. It is the case, and here again no sentiment can blind us to the fact, that in this present life one can resist the grace of God successfully and go on sinning in the very presence of the Cross. When punishment follows upon the sin in this world, we do not

charge God with cruelty, we do not consider that this punishment is giving Him any pleasure; we regard it as inevitable, and we blame only the man. Suppose the man resist the will of God in the life to come as he has resisted it in this life—what then? Will not punishment again dog the steps of sin, and can this be laid any more against the love of God in the future than it could be in the present? It is open to belief, and one desires to believe it, that in the long contest between this foolish human will and the wise and gracious will of God the will of man must in the end be conquered and the will of God prevail, and the end of all evil be good. Yet there is a shadow on this hope, and it is far from certain, for what influence can be imagined acting upon the soul in the other world which has not been affecting the soul in this world? What weapon of love can God have in reserve if the invitations of Holy Scripture, and the commandments of the Lord, and the Cross of Calvary, and the pleading of the Holy Spirit have all failed and been despised? If we sin against the Father, behold, the Son maketh intercession for us; and if we refuse the Son, the Spirit maketh intercession

within our own hearts, if haply we may yield. If we resist and overcome the Spirit so that He be driven in despair from our hearts, and have no more access unto us, then is there any fourth person in the Godhead to be our Saviour?

There remains the evidence to be gathered from the teaching of our Master and His Apostles, and here again it is surely better to depend, not upon single texts, but rather upon the whole trend of thought. Is it not pedantic to spend so much time over the exact meaning of a single Greek word, or over the construction of a sentence? Nor can the matter be settled by the usages of Jewish theology, and the thought of Jesus' day. Our Master was not dependent upon philology when He wished to declare His mind, nor does He show the slightest trace of rabbinical teaching. He was not likely to hide Himself behind the ambiguity of an adjective, nor did it matter to Him what the Rabbis thought. He taught with authority, because He taught with certainty and with lucidity, and throughout His teaching He leaves the profound impression that He regarded the fate of the sinner with nothing less than horror. He compared the

sinner's awful estate to the Valley of Hinnom with its foul, thick, unceasing smoke, and its festering, writhing, unspeakable corruption, and He besought men, with tears in His voice that they should make any sacrifice, to the cutting off of a right hand or the plucking out of a right eye, rather than enter into that fire. He sees the men of evil character depart from the left hand of the Throne with unspeakable sorrow, because they go by their own choice and their own nature into fire prepared for the devil and his angels. There is nothing, He declares, and no one deserving to be feared in this world; there is only one to be feared anywhere, and that is He who can cast the soul into Gehenna. Can any one read the awestruck references of Jesus to the future of the sinner without trembling and without a new sense of the fearful possibilities of the punishment which is entailed on sin? No teacher was ever so charitable as Jesus, no Shepherd of men was ever so merciful; none has had such a heart of pity, none has made such sacrifices for man's help; none has suffered so much that we might not suffer; none has understood the depth of suffering like Jesus; and it must therefore

remain a fact of the last solemnity that the most alarming references to the future of a sinner have fallen from the lips of Jesus.

It is almost a paradox that St. Paul, on whom the Rabbis left their trace, should have a more hopeful outlook than his Master; but there is no question that in various passages St. Paul seems to point to the hope 'that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, God might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth,' and 'that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord unto the glory of God the Father,' and that 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' No doubt an exact exegesis may qualify and reduce the wider scope of such passages, but they allow us to believe that from time to time the great Apostle imagined a victory of Christ which would leave no rebel against His power in the whole universe of God, and no creature of God, reasoning or unreasoning, which would not do Him service. It is the hope we all would cherish,

and which would make glad our hearts; it is the consummation we believe God desires, and which would be the crown of Christ's passion, the

> 'One far-off Divine event
> To which the whole creation moves.'

No one, however, can believe that St. Paul expected that such a restoration would ever be accomplished except through the repentance of the sinner and through the grace of God, for none has insisted more strongly on the inseparable connection between sin, and guilt, and punishment, none has explained more clearly that the sinner can only be justified and sanctified in Christ Jesus. If there is to be a complete restoration, it must be in Christ Jesus, and so the old question rises like a ghost from its grave: What of those who of their own accord, and with deliberation, have refused Christ? What of those who by their own choice and will are cast away?

Ought we not to remember that the question of punishment depends upon the question of sin? and are we not entitled to reason from the arrangements of this life to those of the life to come? Does not punishment follow sin as effect follows cause in this world, and is not this

punishment a sanction of righteousness and a safeguard for righteous men? Would this world be worth living in, or could human society stand for an hour, if wrongdoing had no penalties, and the man who did ill was treated the same as the man who did well? Is it not our complaint that the judicial machinery of human society is so imperfect that the righteous man does not receive his due recompense, and that the unrighteous man escapes his just punishment? Have we not imagined that state of things where the evil-doer would be sharply dealt with for the good of himself and every other person, and the innocent would be protected and blessed? Were we not very indignant a few years ago when the monsters who perpetrated the Armenian atrocities were rewarded instead of being hanged, and when the victims had no escape except the grave? and would it not have more firmly established our faith in Divine providence if by some means the guilty had been punished and the miserable had been delivered? Had it been in one's power to have cast the miscreants who committed unspeakable outrages into some place of suffering, we had done so with a profound

sense of righteousness; and had we been able to remove the unhappy people to a safe and pleasant land, where they would know terror no more, this we had also done with a profound sense of relief. Are we then to suppose that the future life will be no improvement upon the present, but that for ever our moral sense will be insulted with the sight of unpunished wickedness and of wronged innocence? Are we not bound to believe that where there is sin there must and ought to be suffering, and that among the mercies of God by which we are weaned from unrighteousness and held in the way of life everlasting, not the least is the punishment of sin both in this world and in that which is to come?

THE END

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